

# REFORMATION

IN

# RELIGION,

Greatly subservient to

## NATIONAL PROSPERITY.

CONTAINING

Motives for repealing the Test, or Act to prevent the Dangers which may happen from Popish Recusants, and for restoring the whole Christian Institution to its pristine Purity.

Unto which is added,

A Friendly Epistle to the Bishops and Ministers of the Church of England, for plain Truth and sound Peace with Protestant Dissenters, and for uniting them to her in one Christian Communion.

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MALACHY iii. 10, 11, 12.

*Bring ye all the tithes into the store-house, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruit of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of Hosts. And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightful land, saith the Lord of Hosts.*

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THE THIRD EDITION.

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REFORMATION

RELIGION

NATIONAL PROSPERITY

CONTAINING

the history of the Reformation in England, Scotland, and Ireland, from the year 1517 to the present time, with a full and complete account of the various sects and denominations which have arisen since that period.

By the Rev. John Wesley, M.A., Minister of the Gospel in the City of London, and of the University of Oxford.



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LONDON:

Printed for C. Johnson, at the Royal Exchange, and for J. Johnson, in Pall-mall.



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T O T H E

Most Serene August Potentate,

**G E O R G E** the **T H I R D**,

By the grace of God, King of Great Britain,  
France and Ireland; of the continent  
of North America, and all other the  
British territories, islands, and fortresses in  
Europe, Asia, Africa and America.

*Most Gracious Sovereign,*

**T**HROUGH the goodness of Almighty God to  
these your happy kingdoms, and to Europe  
in general, you, Great Sir, have most worthily suc-  
ceeded to the exalted honours of your late Royal  
Grandfather.

He entered into the late war, so glorious for this  
nation, not from motives of ambition, but for re-  
covering and securing to his subjects their invaded  
possessions and privileges, the undoubted rights of  
his crown and dignity, from the spoil and ravage of  
a perfidious encroaching enemy.

It was purely a war of self-defence, the only justi-  
fiable reason for that vast expence of blood and trea-  
sure which attended it. And as such, it was ap-  
proved and seconded by Divine Providence, which  
inspired the leaders and commanders of the British  
forces both by sea and land, and all under them,  
with spirit, wisdom, and fortitude, enabling them  
to overcome all difficulties, and with the most re-

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markable

markable and unparalleled success, in every quarter of the globe, to execute the various operations, which the councils of your illustrious Grandfather and your Majesty so wisely planned, for humbling the pride and retrenching the power of a restless inveterate enemy, and his allies.

These great and good ends being happily attained, your Majesty's moderation and compassionate regard for mankind, even in the height of victory, gave ear to the desires of a foe, reduced to the necessity of suing for a peace, which your Majesty's wisdom and firmness have, by the definitive treaty, honourably established on a solid basis; of which the present and rising generations will, it is hoped, securely reap the advantages.

These happy events, and those which regard your Majesty's high ally, the truly heroic and magnanimous King of Prussia, who, with unequalled firmness, under the most pressing difficulties, withstood the force of so many powerful enemies, combined together for his utter ruin: the safety also of his royal person, notwithstanding the treacherous designs against his life, and his being enabled at last by a peace to secure unto himself the whole of his dominions and claims, at the expence of his haughtiness and enraged foe; are remarkable manifestations that the Divine Being superintends and over-rules the transactions and designs of mankind.

Your Majesty having under God given peace to the world, there remains but one thing more attainable, which can add to your honour and glory, and transmit your fame and character in full lustre to the latest posterity; and that is, to effect an union and harmony among all your subjects in the greatest of all blessings upon earth, namely, in the sincere public profession and practice of true religion, piety and virtue, agreeable to the rule of revelation; removing as far as possible the occasions of their separation

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one from another for the public worship of God, and so putting an happy end to religious debate and contention.

Defender of the Faith is the distinguished title of British kings, and speaks their duty and their attention to the sacred cause of religion. And as the time of profound peace is most suitable for so good a work, attempts for restoring the purity and truth of the christian institution by a reformation of what has been formerly overlooked, and thereby establishing the peace of our christian church in the truth, are now most likely to be effectual, as rigid stiffness is much worn off from the minds of men, and more generous sentiments prevail.

That some things in our established church should be reformed, few ministers will deny. And there are who think that if the two positive institutions of our blessed Lord and Saviour were restored to the exact order and manner in which he himself received the one, and administered the other; and no human articles of faith imposed; the great occasions of separation would be removed. For who could then dissent from the established religion of their country?

This Address, with the following pages on that which is the most important of all subjects, *Religious reformation*, are, with the greatest humility, submitted to your Majesty's wisdom and zeal for the honour of God, and the good of mankind; as nothing less than your Majesty's royal countenance and favour can make them useful to the end proposed, the establishing such a reformation in religion as no truly wise and good man could justly dissent from. May your Majesty happily effect this, and thereby secure to yourself the great pleasure, honour, and glory, of this high, this superlative character of the ancient patriarch, *The friend of God and true religion*.

Nor can your Majesty do too much for the cause of that God, whose special favour has raised you to  
fill



fill the throne of the British empire in early life, surrounded you with honour and glory; has bestowed upon you a Princess, whose distinguished virtues merit the highest regards; a Princess every way qualified to alleviate the cares of government, and compleat your domestic happiness with every social joy; and by whom God has also given your Majesty an amiable Prince, the most desirable pledge of lasting happiness to all your envied subjects.

That God may preserve his valuable life, that every princely grace and virtue may replenish his mind, that he may be every way formed for government after the pattern of his Royal Father, equal to the high and most exalted dignities to which he is born; and that when your Majesty shall late, and may it be very late ere you exchange your temporal for an immortal crown, he may then succeed to your throne, display the same princely virtues, and reign with equal honour and glory; and that these your happy kingdoms may be always governed by a succession of such most desirable kings, descended from your Majesty by him, till time shall be no more, is, most gracious Sovereign, the sincere and fervent prayer of,

*Your Majesty's*

*most Loyal,*

*most Dutiful, and*

*most faithful*

*Subject and Servant,*

*June 4, 1763.*

**THE AUTHOR.**



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This ADDRESS was to his LATE MAJESTY.

TO THE

KING's most Excellent MAJESTY.

*Most Gracious Sovereign,*

**A**LMIGHTY GOD, the great, all-wise parent and ruler of the universe, whose unerring providence superintends the commotions which are in the world, frequently makes the pernicious and most crafty designs of wicked men, subservient to his own glory, and the lasting benefit of those they were designed to injure: and sometimes he so wisely over-rules things, that the intended mischief falls upon the guilty heads of its contrivers: which truth, blessed be God, your Majesty, with your most faithful and loyal subjects, has in a particular manner happily experienced, through the agency of the magnanimous Duke of Cumberland. In this we have the highest reason to rejoice in God; and to praise him also for another singular instance of his goodness and favour to us, in defeating the designs of our enemies upon your Majesty's possessions in America, by the power of his own arm alone; without risque or damage to that naval force, which your Majesty's paternal care had sent thither.

They who have carefully considered the affairs of Europe, but for a few years past, must discern and confess, that almighty God is no unconcerned spectator of the various changes, and mighty events which have happened. One evident proof of this, is that surprising alteration, which appears in the state of the august house of Austria; since the queen of Hungary, in very distressed circumstances, surrounded, and her countries over-run by powerful enemies combined together for the ruin of her family, has nevertheless by the blessing of God, and your Majesty's aid, driven them out of her own dominions both in Germany and Italy; and she is now able, with your Majesty's assistance, to dispute her rights with the common enemy upon his own bor-

**borders.** So that there is reason to hope, by the blessing of God upon the united force of the Allies, that France will ere long receive a total overthrow, the reward due to her perfidy; and never more be able to invade the rights, or to disturb the peace of her neighbours, for which her wealth, policy and strength have for many ages been employed. God grant that her forces may every where meet with such signal defeat, as that which her wicked and rebellious emissaries in Scotland met with from your Majesty's arms, led on to victory by his royal highness the most illustrious and heroic prince, the Duke of Cumberland; by which the peace of your kingdoms, the persons and properties of your subjects are, we hope, effectually secured from all future disturbances and invasions. And with respect to this glorious event, the words of the prophet Daniel, may in some measure be applied to France, Dan. xi. 18, 19. *After this shall he turn his face to the isles, . . . but a prince for his own behalf shall cause the reproach offered by him, to cease; without his own reproach he shall cause it to turn upon him. Then shall he turn his face towards the fort of his own land: but he shall stumble and fall, and not be found.* Which for the public safety, it is hoped, will be the fate of that monarchy before the end of the present war.

The scriptures assure us, that earthly power, when opposed to the spread of truth, must be subdued and put down; which consideration makes it well worth the care of the greatest monarchs to enquire, how their power is employed; whether in promoting, or in retarding the progress of that most sacred and important cause, the cause of true religion. Under which every christian is from the nature of his character and profession obliged to include whatever belongs to the revelation of Jesus Christ, his positive institutions not excepted, they being as much laws of the Messiah as any other; nor can any thing be judged a trifle, which has the sanction of his authority. And if God, by the spirit of prophecy, has so many ages past pointed out something correspondent with the present times, and with the occurrences of your Majesty's reign in particular, does it not thence follow, that some special regard is due to his holy word, and to that particular mode of worship, which by the christian institution he has authorised, and by his only-begotten Son commanded to be preached among all nations for the obedience of faith? Matt. xxiii. 18, 19.

And

And as the new Testament is the only rule of christian worship, it ought carefully to be attended to, and every reformation regulated by it. That there has been a general defection from the purity of the christian religion is undeniable: and whether the reformation in our own land was carried, as far from the errors and encroachments of popish superstition, as it ought to have been, is worthy our inquiry. That all the defects thereof, which have since, or may hereafter be discovered, should be amended, and settled by the original rule of christian practice, is surely what no consistent protestant can dispute. Nor can the reformation of religion by that rule, contained in the new Testament, be attended with any ill consequence to the established government, or the public peace; being entirely agreeable to, and recommended by the articles of the church of England. It may therefore, under your Majesty's auspicious influence, be safely attempted; though, without such influence, it is not likely to make any great progress.

We find that kings, under God, have generally been the chief agents, not only for the peaceable establishment of true religion in a nation, but also for the revival and restoration of it after much decay and innovation. For this the names of Aſa and Jehošaphat are recorded with much honour; but those of Hezekiah and Joſiah, with far more praise and glory, because the reformations under them were in a good degree perfected. They therefore are patterns worthy to be imitated by all devout and religious princes. And as the care of religion in princes doubles the beams of majesty, and adds a superior lustre to all their heroic and benevolent actions; so if your Majesty, in your great wisdom, would be pleased to recommend a careful review of the articles and liturgy of the church of England, to all the bishops and clergy in your dominions, together with free debate and friendly consultation between them, and some of the leading ministers amongst those protestants, who dissent from her communion, as the most likely means to discover and find out every important truth, that so those things in the public worship, which shall not appear plainly warranted by the word of God, may be laid aside; and that whatever is directed in the new Testament which has been neglected or overlooked, may be restored, it will add to the glorious titles which your Majesty has justly merited, this high, this superlative one, The friend of God and true religion,



religion, a title far more excellent than that of the greatest conqueror, and worthy to be aspired after by the wisest and best of kings.

And as reformation in all ages has flourished chiefly by the favour and countenance of kings, it was most fitting, that this tract, with the following epistle for promoting reformation in religion, which has so great a tendency to advance the prosperity of your kingdoms, to procure present felicity and eternal happiness to your subjects, should in all humility be laid at your Majesty's feet; because it must be from your goodness and favour alone, if ever they become useful to that end. And this the author was emboldened to do from your Majesty's disposition to piety, so manifest in many proclamations for holding solemn days of fasting and prayer throughout your kingdoms, whereby all your subjects have often been called upon by you with the deepest humility and contrition, to pour out their souls before God; to confess their great and manifold sins against him, to implore his pardon and forgiveness of them, to seek his face for a blessing upon your Majesty's arms employed in the just and necessary wars we are engaged in; and to render him our most devout thanksgiving for his signal salvation and deliverance in the total overthrow of our rebellious enemies. He was also encouraged to this address, by your Majesty's most gracious and princely declaration, at opening the last session of parliament in the following words.

‘ \* I have, throughout the whole course of my reign, made the laws of the land the rule of my government, the preservation of the constitution in church and state, and the rights of my people the main end of all my actions. . . . The maxims of this constitution shall ever be the rules of my conduct; the interest of me and my people is always the same and inseparable.’

Most gracious Prince, may all your happy and envied people, ever remain truly sensible of these distinguished blessings, which we now enjoy; and be always governed by a succession of such most desirable kings, descended from your Majesty by our beloved Prince of Wales.

That your Majesty's glory may never fade, but always shine with increasing lustre; that his royal highness the Duke may gather fresh laurels to your crown by every action



tion in the cause of truth and liberty; that your Majesty may long live, feared by your enemies, revered by your friends, and beloved by all your subjects; and as death is the inevitable event of human life, so when after a long and prosperous reign, it shall please God to remove you hence, that the cares and glories of your temporal crown and throne, may be exchanged for a happiness and glory as far beyond the reach of speech or thought, as eternity transcends this mortal life, is, most gracious Sovereign, the sincere and fervent prayer of,

*Your Majesty's*

*most Loyal,*

*most Dutiful, and*

*most faithful*

*Subject, and Servant,*

*August 1, 1746.*

THE AUTHOR.

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# P R E F A C E.

**T**HE pages herewith published, were written during the late unnatural rebellion; but not quite compleated and prepared for the press, before the glorious defeat of the rebels in the battle of Culloden, by his royal highness the Duke of Cumberland, April 16, 1746. When for certain reasons they were laid aside. Though indeed reformation is a subject that every administration, and all civil magistrates should pay some regard unto at all times; but it is the indispensable duty of our bishops and the rest of our clergy, by their sacred character, the nature of the christian profession, and the trust reposed in them, to study how that, together with the union of all christians in these nations may best be promoted upon the gospel plan. And as those subjects are most likely to attract the attention of all ranks and degrees of men at such a time as this; when we have been threatened by France with an invasion here in England, designed if possible to intimidate us and draw our fleets from before her ports, that she may slip away powerful succours for the preservation of Louisbourg and Canada, the principal of her concerns at present: Though in all probability she will soon involve us in a dangerous war upon the continent of Europe, of which none can tell the issue, nor when it will end.

On these considerations, the author now thinks it a fit time to publish what he had written so long ago for the good of his country; hoping it will be received with candour by the public, as well as other pieces have been on the same subject. And though he has neither altered nor enlarged the address to his Majesty, in order therein to take notice of other later occurrences; yet he thinks our present circumstances in this most important crisis highly worthy the serious attention of every Briton. The universal resentment which we justly bear to the insults given, and the attack made upon our colonies in a time of profound peace; and in violation of the most solemn treaties; by a perfidious nation the common enemy of Europe; together with that unparalleled unanimity which appears among us for vindicating the honour and glory of our Sovereign; for asserting our rights, and for recovering and maintaining the possessions of Great-Britain, are

*an happy indication of success in the approaching war; for union and concord always add strength and vigour to society. Nevertheless it becomes us as rational creatures dependant upon Providence, but more especially as christians who believe divine revelation; to commit our cause unto God, to bow with the most awful reverence and deep humility before the Majesty of heaven for the pardon of our abounding sins; and to implore his direction and blessing upon all our just and lawful undertakings against our enemies. This seems to have been intimated to us by our sovereign, in his most gracious speech at breaking up of the last session of parliament. That he should, in all events, rely on the justice of his cause, the effectual support of his people, and the protection of the Divine Providence. And from this religious disposition, he has now by proclamation required all his subjects throughout his three kingdoms, to devote themselves to God in the most humble and reverent manner, by solemn fasting and prayer; for obtaining these most desirable blessings; and for averting those judgments which our sins deserve, and mercifully preserving our land from that vast and dreadful ruin, with which earthquakes in diverse places have of late been attended. And as having been more frequent than in any former age of the world, seems one of the signs fore-running our Saviour's second appearance; which God in mercy hasten for Israel's sake, and the believers joy.*

*God has often frustrated the deep-laid designs of our enemies when just ripe for execution, and saved our nation from the intended evils: salvations which ought never to be forgotten by us, any more than his special goodness and favour in our present safety, from those terrible and surprizing calamities with which many parts of the world have of late been visited, and sometimes just felt here, as warnings to us. These are loud calls upon us for praise and thanksgivings to our kind preserver: and the laws of gratitude oblige to a reformation not only of life and manners, but also in other parts of our holy religion: that we carefully restore and maintain a strict regard to the pure and uncorrupted worship of God; the most fit and suitable returns which we can make for his distinguished mercies: and if this reformation be universal, we may then justly hope, that the divine goodness will still deliver, succeed our enterprizes, and cause us to triumph over all our enemies.*

*Our success in America, except in one single case, has been as great as could well be hoped for, the seasons, distance, country,*

and strength of the enemy considered. The check which our arms met with by the defeat under general Braddock, may in its consequences prove a blessing to us. It shews that we are not to trust wholly in an arm of flesh, in the bravery of our officers, or the regularity and discipline of our troops, but in the God of battles. It was he who succeeded the expedition to Cape-Breton in the last war; by a few unexperienced undisciplined troops from New-England, in themselves, every way unequal to so great an enterprize. But for their religious piety and virtue, stedfast faith and reliance upon God; he gave them possession of the strong fenced city Louisbourg as it were without loss or bloodshed; notwithstanding the immense sums laid out by France to render it impregnable. Such a surprizing coincidence of events, happily concurring throughout the whole undertaking to facilitate that conquest, made the enemy confess, it was visible God fought for us\*. And as his infinite wisdom and almighty power, does sometimes bring good to his people out of the greatest evil; so the natural effect of our misfortune under Braddock, must be greater circumspection in our other commanders; which has appeared with success in the brave general Sir William Johnson. But its being (if some accounts be true) the happy occasion of great dissention, and something of a breach between the French troops and those Indians to whom the ruin of Braddock's corps was chiefly owing, may be a greater advantage to us, than if he had been victorious in that action, and had afterwards invested Fort Du Quesne: and may, if well improved, contribute greatly to the total ruin of the French interest with those people, and so prevent their ever having power any more to disturb or invade any of our settlements in America, by rooting them entirely out of our colonies, and even out of Canada itself: without which, there can be no dependance for security whilst the French monarchy subsists.

The escape of the French fleets home to Brest, and the junction from Toulon, may perhaps excite, and in some measure enable that treacherous power for a time, to extend and carry on her destructive schemes; till she involve more states and kingdoms beside this (the chief object of her hate) in blood and confusion; and thereby form so strong a confederacy against herself, as she shall not in the end be able to withstand. The  
dis-



*distress already brought upon her trade by our fleets and cruizers, must, if continued with the same spirit and vigour, create discontents, and perhaps insurrections among the subjects of that kingdom: and in a little time, so far deprive her of the sinews of war, as to render her unable to bribe foreign courts, or to support her own troops; and at last prepare the way by a new partition treaty, for the dissolution of that perjured monarchy, without which there can be no lasting security for any of the states and kingdoms bordering upon her. I call France a perjured monarchy, because for several hundred years past, the measures of that court have been one continued series of deceit and falshood, injury and oppression, fraud and injustice, war and bloodshed; in direct breach of faith and the most solemn treaties; and in the most flagrant and open violation of her promises and oaths. For proof of which, read but A Sketch of French Politicks deduced from history and modern facts, published in the year 1735. Facts worthy to be known, and constantly remembered by every senator in Britain; till that haughty and imperious power is effectually subdued and broken. And to this that noble and growing spirit of liberty, which for some years has discovered itself in many subjects of the French king, may perhaps contribute; as it is the only way to free themselves from that oppressive yoke of tyranny which those people have long groaned under both to church and state. These events are not impossible: and if they could be happily effected, the blood and treasure of Britain can never be employed to nobler and better purposes. May the divine wisdom direct our councils, and prosper our arms.*

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# REFORMATION I N RELIGION

The great means of  
NATIONAL PROSPERITY.

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## CHAP. I.

*Of Religious Reformation in general; shewing that regard is due to the positive, as well as to the moral precepts which God has appointed.*

**W**HILST despotick princes and lawless priests have usurped dominion over the persons and properties, and enslaved the consciences, of mankind, in most of the nations round us, it is yet, in this happy land of light and liberty, the glory of our government, and praise of our established church, that all men are secure in the former, and can safely act according to the latter. For here such free indulgence is granted to scrupulous consciences in matters of religion, that, under the protection and security of law, protestant dissenters from the church of *England*, may at any time freely assemble together for the worship and service of Almighty God, according to the dictates of conscience, without fear or molestation. And the grateful return on their part, made to their superiors, is a steady and faithful allegiance to the King upon the throne, dutiful obedience to civil magistrates, and peaceable subjection to the laws of their country, which, in the late times of danger, have been manifested by untainted, unfeigned loyalty, accompanied with chearful contributions to support and secure the civil government under our present sovereign and his royal descendants; on whom, under God, all that is dear and valuable to us as Britons and Christians intirely depends. The universal acknowledgment of this,

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and

and the general union of his majesty's subjects in hearty and loyal associations throughout his dominions to stand by him with their lives and fortunes against a lawless crew of thieves and robbers, murderers and assassins, headed by a popish pretender to his crown, a bigot from *Rome*, and the beggarly tool of *France* and *Spain*, must raise in his royal breast, such a complacency and delight in them, as can only be heightened by the general reformation of his people, by composing our religious disputes, and by uniting us all in one christian communion, upon the true scripture foundation. The first of which I shall now enter upon.

There is no man, I presume, who seriously surveys the present state of this nation, but will acknowledge in general terms, that a reformation is highly necessary; nor is it less certain in itself, that this reformation should extend to all those things which need to be reformed. But yet I have observed, with no small concern, a great defect in some late writings, which have been well received by the public; and are addressed both to the clergy and laity of all degrees, in very warm and pathetic exhortations to a reformation. They paint the luxury and other vices, which abound amongst us, in very lively colours, and demonstrate the evil consequences attending them; they prove the necessity of reforming our manners in order to prevent the judgments of God, and procure the continuance of his favour, protection and blessing. I freely acknowledge, that as gross and open immoralities strike our minds with the greatest abhorrence; so they are most pernicious in their effects to the public, as well as to private Christians. For this reason their zeal is very commendable, who strenuously urge and promote a reformation of manners; but yet we ought not to overlook those abuses, which have crept into the positive institutions of the Gospel. Every deviation from the purity of the christian religion ought to be rectified, whether it consist in a violation of the moral or positive institutions of our great Lawgiver. This seems to me undeniably plain from the New Testament, which is the rule of our christian duty, and which ought likewise to be the standard of our reformation; because this does not only give us directions for the government of our temper and actions; but also teaches us the due administration of the two sacraments appointed by Christ. All the exhortations to steadfastness in the christian religion, and all the cautions against admit-  
ting



ting any corrupt innovations therein, concern the observation of the worship and ordinances of the Gospel, as well as the practice of that morality, which it enjoyns. This appears no less from the great end of the positive institutions of our holy religion, for they were designed to be a means of holiness to particular persons, as well as to preserve the christian religion in the world. In them we vow obedience to Christ, and meditate on the inconceivable love of God and Christ, which has an apt tendency to fill our souls with suitable love and gratitude, the strongest motives to obedience: And these ends will be most effectually answered, where they are most purely observed. On the contrary, every human innovation must lessen their usefulness, in proportion to its degeneracy from the original institution. For instance, has not the popish doctrine concerning the Lord's supper made way for idolatry in the church of *Rome*?

Our reformers in this nation being very sensible of this, wisely endeavoured to reform the corruptions of the church of *Rome* in the two sacraments which Christ has appointed. They not only abolished monasteries and nunneries, those nurseries of idleness and vice, and laboured to reform the lives both of priests and people; but they also shewed a regard to the positive ordinances of the gospel. In the Lord's supper they restored the cup to the laity, discarded the absurd doctrine of transubstantiation, and consequently forbade the adoration of the host. In baptism they laid aside many of the fopperies, which that church had introduced and annexed to it. All this was very commendable; and tho they did not go so far, as they should have done; yet some of the articles of our church seem to have been form'd with a view to excite and to encourage all their successors, still further to improve, promote and perfect that great and good work, which they had so laudably and so successfully begun. And as it is high time for us to think of a farther reformation in religion, we should follow the good example they left us, and extend our regard to the positive injunctions, as well as to the moral precepts of our blessed Lord.

Since then every corruption, either in the moral precepts, or positive rites of the gospel ought to be reformed; and the latter have been passed over unheeded by those, who ought to have taken notice of them, I shall in my second and third chapters particularly consider the two positive ordinances, which Christ has ordained to be ob-

served in his church. For though we ought not to lay too much stress on these, yet they ought not to be neglected; and consequently a reformation from all innovations, which have been made in them, is necessary, as well as a reformation of our lives and manners. I have always looked upon unfeigned piety towards God, benevolence and justice towards all mankind, with the practice of purity, temperance and other virtues which concern ourselves, as the essentials of religion; without which the most exact performance of external rites will profit no man, but bring upon him a more heavy condemnation in the awful day of judgment. This sentiment with the true nature of the christian sacraments; and the moral obligation, we are under religiously to observe them, have been more fully represented in the supplement to the sermons preached against popery at *Salters Hall*. A piece not unworthy the public attention.

That we ought to have a due regard to all the laws of Christ, and reform all corruptions in his holy sacraments, as well as in our lives, may I think be justly argued from these quotations out of the bible which I shall cite hereafter. Did not God require a strict attachment to his orders with respect to the positive, as well as with respect to the moral laws given to the *Jews*; and was he not offended with them for their deviations from the former, as well as for their immoralities? Nay their breach of his positive institutions was an inlet to all that idolatry and wickedness, which reigned amongst them. The covenant indeed, which God made with the *Israelites*, and the rituals enjoined them by the Mosaic institution were designed to secure them from the heinous sin of idolatry, and to keep them stedfast in the practice of true piety and real holiness; and therefore it was not their idolatry and other immoralities only; but their apostacy also from the rituals, they were to observe in his worship, which were the cause of his inflicting upon them the many and long judgements hereafter recited. And consequently his design therein was to recover them to a strict observation of the rituals of his law, as well as to a sincere obedience to the moral precepts which it contained.

What I am pleading for in this tract is a general reformation of religion; tho', I am not insensible how difficult a thing it is to persuade persons to correct those errors, in which they were educated. Nevertheless to reform known corruptions is not only a necessary duty, but

a laudable thing; whilst persisting in them is really blameworthy, as well as inconsistent with our allegiance to Christ. However I shall not here enquire into those causes, which obstruct a more perfect reformation amongst Christians. I have here discharged my own conscience in pleading for it at a time, when the state of the nation might not only induce every man to think of reforming himself, but also put us upon a public and general reformation of religion. And as what I have here said, must shew, that I am, as far as any man, from laying more stress on the strict observation of positive rites, than on the practice of moral virtue; so every ingenuous person must acknowledge, that a due regard should be shewn to every divine appointment, whether it be of more or less consequence. This plainly appears from the words of Christ, in which he reproves the immoralities of the Pharisees, and with which I shall conclude this chapter. *Ye pay tithe, says he, of mint, and annise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith, or the love of God. These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the others undone,* Mat. xxiii. 23. Luke. xi. 42.

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## C H A P. II.

*Motives for repealing the Test, or Act for preventing dangers, which may happen from popish recusants, taken from the nature and end of the Lord's supper, with frequent and gross abuses of it.*

**A**S a general reformation of religion necessarily implies reformation in the several parts of it; I shall therefore say something in particular about the two positive ordinances which Christ appointed to be observed in his church; because the freeing of them from the corruptions and abuses which have unhappily been introduced amongst us, seems in my opinion to have a suitable tendency for composing the most material of our religious disputes; and to lay a good foundation for uniting us all in one christian communion upon the true scripture foundation.

Were we thus happily united, the act of toleration would be superseded without repeal; and the corporation act reduced to the true intent of that law. But as to the test, or *act for preventing dangers which may happen from popish recusants*, the penalties it inflicts are such, that it may justly be looked upon as a severe oppressive law, utterly



terly inconsistent with the rights of a peaceable free people. And as the sole intention of it was to *prevent dangers, which may happen from popish recusants*, it seems very unjust, that so numerous a body of his Majesty's most dutiful and most loyal subjects, as the protestant dissenters are, should be thereby subjected to such unreasonable inconvenience, and great disadvantage, as they in no respect deserve; and which this act was never designed to lay them under. But with respect to religion, it is of too heinous a nature to be continued, or to admit of amendment, and therefore ought to be repealed. It appears to me to be a national evil, and such as has induced thousands to profane a solemn institution, which none should ever partake of, but with the greatest reverence, and love to the exalted institutor, in remembrance of whom alone, it ought always to be received; without any temporal or worldly views whatsoever. But to make a civil test of this sacred rite, is such an egregious prostitution of Christ's ordinance; as no nation in the world besides this was ever guilty of; and as it no ways contributes to the safety of the state, but is highly injurious to it; so every good subject, as well as every pious christian should endeavour to remove such an evil, that the divine displeasure for so heinous a sin, may be prevented.

Hence it is, that protestant dissenters look upon the repeal of the test act, to be of the highest importance to the public, and of the utmost concern to every serious christian: and therefore judge, that all lawful means ought to be used, in order to obtain the same; and I make no doubt, but many sober and religious persons of our established church, will rejoice in their success: whilst they who contribute to so laudable a design, will enjoy the satisfaction of having been instrumental, in rescuing one of the most solemn institutions of the Son of God from an abandoned prostitution, the chief motive which hath hitherto excited them to desire the repeal of that law. For when the great Legislator of the christian church first instituted this sacrament, as a standing memorial of his passion, he told his disciples, and in them all who profess the christian name; *that as oft as they partake thereof, they should do it in remembrance of him*, Luke xxii. 19. compared with 1 Cor. xi. 25. And for any, who have either read or heard this, to partake thereof with any other views, or for any other purposes than Christ himself designed they should, appears to me a manifest contempt of his word;

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I may say, such a gross abuse and profanation of his ordinance, as must most highly offend him; because by the law which they desire to have repealed, the christian sacrament is made a civil test, which is changing the very end and design of the institution. And is it not greatly to be feared? nay, is it not very certain? that, in consequence of this change, many persons, who have no faith in the death and sufferings of Christ, nor any reverence for his laws, come, and kneel at his table, and partake of his holy supper, not to *shew forth the Lord's death*, 1 Cor. xi. 26. nor so much as *discerning the Lord's body*, ver. 29. but on the contrary, they go there discerning a post, and in remembrance of a post, and they partake thereof, only as a civil rite imposed by law, as a test or qualification to enable them to hold or enjoy some place of honour or profit? I do not say, that this is *crucifying to themselves the Son of God afresh, and putting him to an open shame*, Heb. vi. 6. or *treading under foot the Son of God, and counting the blood of the covenant wherewith they were sanctified an unholy thing, and doing despite to the spirit of grace*, Heb. x. 26—31. but it is too much like what the apostle calls a being *guilty of the body and blood of the Lord*, 1 Cor. xi. 27. And if this be not a sinful profanation of that solemn institution, I know not what can be. And if the unworthily partaking of this same ordinance amongst the Corinthians, brought a judgment upon many of the members of that Church; for which *cause*, says the apostle, *many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep*, 1 Cor. xi. 27, 29, 30. that is, were cut off by death\*. What therefore may not be justly feared, if in contempt of scripture evidence, which I apprehend is generally much better known, and more clearly understood now, with respect to this ordinance, than at the time when those laws were made: I say what may not be feared, if this prostitution be still continued, and as it were forced upon the subject by an established law; so that no man can serve his country in any public office under the crown without it.

These considerations should make all christians unwearied in their applications to the legislature, till the repeal of this law is obtained, and a way thereby made for a more general reformation and free communion, even

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\* See Dr. Hammond on this text.

such as was proposed and desired by those concerned in the following FRIENDLY EPISTLE to the BISHOPS and MINISTERS of the CHURCH OF ENGLAND, *for plain truth, and sound peace between them and all pious Protestants*, that we may in the first place, preserve the wise ends of Christ's institution, for advancing true piety and strict virtue: and secondly promote the cause of civil liberty, and thereby restore to a great number of his Majesty's most dutiful and most loyal subjects, their native rights and privileges: which will be as much to the honour and glory of his Majesty's wife and good government, as the unjust restraints, which, for conscience sake, they at present lie under, is to the reproach of the protestant religion here in *England*, and a prejudice to the commonwealth, as it excludes from her service, many of the most upright and conscientious persons, even of our established church. For I have known some, who were members thereof, and thought it their duty to attend her communion, but yet durst not receive the Lord's supper, as a qualification for a civil post: which therefore they declined accepting upon the same foot, with multitudes of protestant dissenters, to the just reproach of others who do conform; and thus those who are well qualified to serve their country with the greatest faithfulness, are turned aside; whilst a way is made for men to enter, who are of the corruptest principles, as well as most licentious and immoral in their lives; even such, as it may too justly be supposed, neither fear God, nor regard man, but for worldly interest: and as such therefore, are most unfit to be trusted. Nay, I have been told of one, who I suppose had been refused the Lord's supper, on account of his immoralities, but after he had obtained a place, said, *Now I will go to my parson, and say to him, G—d—m you, Sir, give me the sacrament, and he dares not deny me.* And of two other profane companions, who, being admitted to places, said one to another in the greatest derision of the ordinance, *Now—we must go and take the sop.* Another whose pride and extravagance reduced him to compound with his creditors for many thousand pounds, having afterwards obtained a place, and speaking about the profits of it, said in the same ludicrous and wicked strain, *I eat a bit of bread, and drank some wine for it.* Such shameful horrid impieties, and such shocking difficulties laid upon conscientious ministers, who are obliged to admit unworthy and unsuitable subjects to the Lord's table, are a scandal

dal and reproach to the christian name, but peculiarly confined to the church of *England*: For the removal of which it might justly and most reasonably have been expected, that our bishops and the rest of our clergy, as the guardians of true religion, the patrons of real piety and sincere devotion, would have been the first and most zealous of all men to solicit the repeal of this law, the fatal source and cause of so great a profanation of Christ's holy institution.

And as hypocrisy is a most detestable sin, even upon the principles of natural religion, serious deists, themselves must desire the repeal of this law, that they may not be compelled any longer to put on the mask and appearance of christianity, which they so openly despise; nor be obliged to assemble with christians at the Lord's table, as if they were sincere believers in Christ, while they disown his mission, and deny him to have been a Prophet sent from God to reform and instruct mankind.

And if there be any persons inclined to infidelity, who are not so thoroughly settled in their principles; but have some doubts left upon their minds, that the christian religion might possibly come from God; this argument must present itself to their consciences with still greater weight, as it will then extend both to natural and revealed religion.

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### C H A P. III.

*Scripture motives for restoring the ordinance of baptism, with the whole christian institution to its pristine purity.*

**W**HAT has in the foregoing chapter been urged as reasons and motives for endeavouring to obtain the repeal of the Test, or Act for preventing dangers which may happen from *popish Recusants*: I presume cannot displease such christians, who sincerely desire to have the ordinance of the Lord's supper rescued from that notorious abuse, which has so long been put upon it. And in like manner, should not every sincere christian, as zealously endeavour to purge the other solemn ordinance of the Son of God from those popish corruptions, and that manifest misapplication of it to infants, which has so much longer prevailed in the christian world? For, as it is the first and chief of Christ's institutions, that by which men and wo-

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men were to enter into his church, and take upon them the profession of his holy religion, according to the divine appointment; and when accompanied with purity of life, and true piety towards God, gives us a right and title to partake of his holy supper; it demands our utmost care and attention, that it may most effectually answer the wise ends for which it was appointed, and which our present practice of infant sprinkling is very far from doing: There being nothing significant in it, nothing of *a death unto sin*, or of *a new birth unto righteousness* held forth by the mode, nothing of *repentance* and *forsaking of sin*, no *faith* or hope in the divine *promises*, nor the least joy or comfort resulting to the soul of the subject from any act of obedience. What then can it be accounted, but such an unprofitable and insignificant ceremony, as the learned Dr. Jeremy Taylor, a very pious prelate of our church, has, when personating one of the baptist persuasion, too justly described in the following words. *Lib. Prophecy*, p. 244.

‘Whoever will pertinaciously persist in the opinion of the pædo-baptist, and practise accordingly, they pollute the blood of the everlasting covenant: they dishonour and make a pageantry of the sacrament: they ineffectually represent a sepulture into the death of Christ, and please themselves in a sign without effect, making baptism like the fig-tree in the gospel, full of leaves, but no fruit; they invoke the holy ghost in vain, doing as if one should call upon him to illuminate a stone or a tree.’

But in adult baptism the death and resurrection of Christ are represented in the most lively and most solemn manner, so as to impress the mind of the subject with the most awful reverence of the divine Being, and of the solemn covenant he thereby enters into with him; no longer to *live unto himself*, but *unto him that dyed for him and rose again*. 2 Cor. v. 15. nor any more to walk according to the *sinful lusts and desires of the flesh and of the mind*, but to *live unto Christ Jesus*, and to walk even as he walked. Eph. ii. 23. This most antient practice therefore must necessarily be a much better security than infant sprinkling against temptations, and the prevailing power and dominion of sin, according to this strong and most excellent reasoning upon it, which the great apostle St. Paul makes use of, as a powerful argument to excite and stir up the christians in his time, to holiness and purity of life. *Romans vi. 2—14.*

How



How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall also be in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead, is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once, but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin; but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal Body, that ye should obey it in the lust thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: But yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead; and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

And the gracious dispensation of the gospel, is so far superior to that of the law; the sin and danger of a wilful disobedience to it so certain, that the sacred writers inforce our attention and regard to all the duties which it contains, in the strongest and most awful terms.

Heb. iii. 1, 2. Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and high priest of our profession, Christ Jesus; who was faithful to him that appointed him. Matth. iii. 15. Joh. xii. 44—50. As also Moses was faithful in all his house. Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, least at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by those that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the holy ghost, according to his own will. Heb. ii. 1—4. For though Jesus Christ was a son, yet learned he obedience, by the things which he suffered; and being made

perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him. Ch. v. 8, 9. And as we have such an high priest over the house of God: let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering . . . ., for we know him that hath said, vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompence, saith the Lord. And again, the Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Ch. x. 21—31. Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it . . . . For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do. Ch. iv. 1—12, 13.

These verses, though chiefly designed to keep the Hebrews from a total apostacy from christianity, were I think intended also, to preserve in them a strict regard to the positive institutions of the gospel; as a means of preventing such apostacy: which is so plain from ch. vi. 2. and ch. x. 22, that I believe nobody will deny it. But I am very far from making any comparison between pædo-baptism and apostacy from the christian profession; I have transcribed these verses, not as relating to baptism and the Lord's supper only, but as including these ordinances with every thing else, which the christian religion obliges us to observe. And as the neglect, and contempt of the two ordinances, which Christ has instituted; make way for that indifferency in religion, which too often ends in apostacy and infidelity, it should be the care of all christians to guard against the beginning of such evils, by restoring them to the purity and simplicity of their original institution in all respects.

But such has been the propensity of mankind in general, to degenerate from true religion, and fall into idolatry and will worship, that God was often obliged to chastise that sin in his chosen people, by sending his judgments upon them, subjecting them to the sword, and enslaving them to their enemies, in order to reclaim them: and when they were not wholly given to idolatry, but worshipped him in a false way, he complained that *their fear*

towards him was taught by the precepts of men, and by his prophets threatened them in the following words. Isa. xxix. 13, 14. *Wherefore the Lord said, forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear towards me is taught by the precepts of men: Therefore behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work amongst this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid.* Our blessed Lord also severely reprov'd the Scribes and Pharisees, the priests and rulers of the Jews, because they made void the commandment of God by their own traditions. But Jesus answered, and said unto them, *Why do you also transgress the commandment of God by your traditions? Howbeit, in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandments of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do.* And he said unto them, *Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your own tradition, . . . making the word of God of none effect, through your tradition, which ye have delivered.* Matth. xv. 3, 6, 9. Mark vii. 7; 8, 9, 13. And that he might remove their prejudices, correct their errors, and reform their practice, he directed them to *search the scriptures*, as the most certain testimony. Joh. v. 39. promising some of the greatest spiritual blessings to those, who *believe on him as the scripture hath said.* Joh. vii. 37, 39. And that no man might flatter himself with being esteemed the friend and disciple of Christ upon any terms, which are short of uniform obedience; our blessed Lord has plainly signified, that he will not look upon any as such, who have not respect unto all his commands, when he says, Joh. xv. 14. *Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.* Which should induce every believer, conscientiously to observe the positive as well as moral precepts of his gospel. And that christians might be kept stedfast in the truth, and persevere in it without deviating from the purity of the christian institution; *not mixing with it any Jewish observances, any old or new traditions, nor with any thing that is false or foreign to it;* the great apostle St. Paul solemnly declared to the elders of the church at Ephesus, that he had kept back nothing that was profitable unto them, but had shewed them and taught them publickly from house to house.

*Testifying*



*Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. Adding thereto this awful appeal: Wherefore, I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God. And, at his last farewell, he leaves with them this solemn charge and strict caution, Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the holy ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember that by the space of three years, I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears . . . having shewed you all things . . . and when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down and prayed with them all. Acts xx. 20, 21, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 36.*

And moreover in his epistle to the church at Galatia, he has twice denounced the most severe anathema against all those, who might corrupt or pervert the gospel, even though it should have been done by himself, or by an angel from heaven, a being much higher and greater than any apostle. *I marvel, says he, that you are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ, unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you, than that ye have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ. But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me, is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. Gal. i. 6, 12.* How great therefore must their folly be, who, without any divine warrant, any the least apostolical precept or example, have changed that significant, that rational and very useful institution of God's only begotten Son, into an empty, useless, and irrational ceremony, of frail sinful man's devising, by substituting instead of the divine command something else, which is better calculated to subserve the purposes of superstition?

Mr.



Mr. Killingworth's Supplement to the Sermons preached against popery at Salters Hall, before referred to, and the same author's Remarks on the several Answers to Christianity not founded on Argument, with the Letters annexed, were, I believe, published purely with a view to restore and secure a just regard to this holy institution of our great Lord and Master, to excite all protestant christians more consistently and successfully to oppose and confute papists and infidels, and thereby prevent the baneful influence, which the daring writings and unwearied endeavours of those enemies to truth and revelation, may otherwise have upon mankind. And if what I have here published be any way conducive to those valuable ends in reforming what is amiss, and the establishment of our church in the truth, I shall greatly rejoice. But I am very far from making a strict application of the several scriptures here cited, to those of the pædo-baptist persuasion. My view in transcribing them, as I have done, is only to bring them under the most serious consideration of all who practice it, from a firm persuasion, that they themselves will then make such a suitable improvement of them in their own minds, as will tend most to the glory of God, their own true comfort, and be most likely to issue in the real interest and future prosperity of this kingdom. This is what all religious reformations have a natural tendency to procure, as might largely be proved from many instances recorded in history; some of which I shall give, after I have first recited God's own covenant with his chosen people, and part of the encouragement he then gave them, as a nation, stedfastly to persevere in a strict regard to his appointed worship, by the promises of all temporal blessings; and in particular, of success against all their enemies, with lasting dominion over them. At the same time he threatened them, that if they, as a nation disregarded the voice of the Lord their God; and refused to observe all his commandments and his statutes, that then all manner of calamities should come upon them; so that they should not prosper in any thing, but should be smitten and flee before their enemies; be oppressed and spoiled evermore, and no man should save them. And tho our blessed Lord does not threaten immediate punishment in this life, upon the violation, nor on the rejection of his holy laws; yet more suitable to the nature of the christian dispensation, he enforces the strictest regard,

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and most exact obedience to the whole of his institution, by the highest and most awful sanctions, where he says, *I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me, should not abide in darkness. And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.* John xii. 44—50.

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#### C H A P. IV.

*God's covenant with the nation of the Jews, promising them all the temporal blessings in the practice of virtue and true religion, and threatening to punish them, with all kinds of calamity and distress, if they departed from his worship and law. His care to secure the observation thereof, to have all the people instructed therein, and to recover them to the worship of himself, when they had revolted to idolatry, as therein foretold.*

**T**HIS day the Lord thy God hath commanded thee to do these statutes and judgments: thou shalt therefore keep and do them with all thine heart, and with all thy soul. Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes and his commandments and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice. And the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people, as he hath promised thee, and that thou shouldst keep all his commandments, and to make thee high above all nations which he hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honour, and that thou mayest be an holy people unto the Lord thy God, as he hath spoken. Deut. xxvi. 16-19. See also ch. xxvii.

And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the Lord thy God, to observe and do all his commandments which I command thee this day, the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God.

God. Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field. Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store. Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out. The Lord shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee, to be smitten before thy face: they shall come out against thee one way, and flee before thee seven ways. The Lord shall command the blessing upon thee in thy store houses, and in all that thou settest thine hand unto. . . . The Lord shall establish thee an holy people unto himself, as he hath sworn unto thee, if thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, and walk in his ways. And all people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the Lord, and they shall be afraid of thee. . . . The Lord shall open thee his good treasure, the heaven to give thee rain unto thy land in his season, and to bless all the works of thine hand: And thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow. And the Lord shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath: If that thou hearken unto the commandments of the Lord thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe and to do them. And thou shalt not go aside from any of the words which I command thee this day, to the right hand, or to the left, to go after other Gods to serve them.

But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and do all his commandments, and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee. Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field. Cursed shall be thy basket and thy store. Cursed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy land, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Cursed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and cursed shalt thou be when thou goest out. The Lord shall send upon thee cursing, vexation, and rebuke, in all that thou settest thine hand unto for to do; until thou be destroyed, and until thou perish quickly; because of the wickedness of thy doings, whereby thou hast forsaken me. . . . The Lord shall cause thee to be smitten before thine enemies, thou shalt go out one way against them, and flee seven ways before them; and shalt

be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth. . . . And thou shalt grope at noon day, as the blind gropeth in darkness, and thou shalt not prosper in thy ways: and thou shalt be only oppressed, and spoiled ever more, and no man shall save thee. . . . The fruit of thy land, and all thy labours shall a nation which thou knowest not, eat up: and thou shalt be only oppressed and crushed away. . . . The Lord shall bring thee, and thy king which thou shalt set over thee, unto a nation which neither thou, nor thy fathers have known; and there shalt thou serve other gods, wood and stone. And thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a by-word, among all nations whether the Lord shall lead thee. . . . The stranger that is within thee, shall get up above thee very high; and thou shalt come down very low. He shall lend to thee, and thou shalt not lend to him: He shall be the head, and thou shalt be the tail. Moreover, all these curses shall come upon thee, and shall pursue thee, and overtake thee, till thou be destroyed: because thou hearkenedst not unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which he commanded thee. . . . The Lord shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flieth, a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand: a nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old, nor shew favour to the young: And he shall eat the fruit of thy cattle, and the fruit of thy land, until thou be destroyed: Which also shall not leave thee either corn, wine, or oil, or the increase of thy kine, or flock of thy sheep, until he have destroyed thee, &c. . . . If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law, that are written in this book, that thou mayest fear this great and glorious name, **THE LORD THY GOD**; . . . And ye shall be left few in number, whereas ye were as the stars of heaven for multitude: because thou wouldest not obey the voice of the Lord thy God. And it shall come to pass, that as the Lord rejoiced over you to do you good, and to multiply you: so the Lord will rejoyce over you to destroy you, and to bring you to nought; and ye shall be plucked from off the land whether thou goest to possess it. And the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth, even unto the other; and there thou shalt serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, even wood and stone. And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the



the sole of thy feet have rest : But the Lord shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind. And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee, and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have no assurance of thy life, &c. Ch. xxviii. 1--7. 9, 10, 12--15--20. 25, 29, 33, 36, 37, 43--45, 49--51. 58, 62--66.

These are the words of the covenant, which the Lord commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel, in the land of Moab, beside the covenant which he made with them in Horeb. And Moses called unto all Israel, and said unto them, Ye have seen all that the Lord did before your eyes in the land of Egypt, unto Pharoah, and unto all his servants, and unto all his land ; the great temptations which thine eyes have seen, the signs and those great miracles. . . . Keep therefore the words of this covenant, and do them, that ye may prosper in all that ye do. . . . That he may establish thee to day for a people unto himself, and that he may be unto thee a God, as he hath said unto thee, and as he hath sworn unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. Ch. xxix. 1-3. 9, 13.

*And such was the care of almighty God to secure the honour of his name and truth, and to prevent, as much as possible, any family or single person from falling into a spirit of infidelity, and becoming a snare to his people by propagating an opinion, that they were not obliged to conform to all the precepts of this general, national covenant, because they were not personally present in the congregation of Israel, when this law was made and published, or from imagining, that the evils God threatened to inflict for the breach of his laws should not come upon them, though he lived in wickedness, from a supposition that they were national and not personal, the Lord has added, ver. 14. Neither with you only do I make this covenant, and this oath ; but with him that standeth here with us this day, before the Lord our God, and also with him that is not here with us this day : lest there should be among you man or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from the Lord our God, to go and serve the gods of these nations ; lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood, and it comes to pass when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to theft : the Lord will not spare him, but then the anger of the Lord, and his jealousy shall smother against that man, and all the curses*

that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven. And the Lord shall separate him unto evil, out of all the tribes of Israel, according to all the curses of the covenant, that are written in this book of the law. So that the generation to come of your children, that shall rise up after you, and the stranger that shall come from a far land, shall say, when they see the plagues of the land, and the sicknesses which the Lord hath laid upon it; and that the whole land thereof is brimstone, and salt, and burning, that it is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth therein, like the overthrow of Sodom, and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim, which the Lord overthrew in his anger and his wrath: Even all nations shall say, wherefore hath the Lord done thus unto this land? What meaneth the heat of this great anger? Then men shall say, because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord God of their fathers, which he made with them when he brought them forth out of Egypt. For they went and served other gods, and worshipped them, gods whom they knew not, and who had not given to them any portion. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against this land, to bring upon it all the curses that are written in this book. And the Lord rooted them out of their land, in anger, and in wrath, and in great indignation, and cast them into another land, as it is at this day. The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this Law. ver. 29.

*The xxx. Chap. contains encouragement to repentance and reformation, by the promises of a recovery, and re-establishment in their own land after their ruin and dispersion for their great iniquities and disobedience; and that then God would rejoyce over them to do them good, and multiply them above their fathers.*

*In the xxxi. Chap. God appoints the solemn reading of the Law every seventh year, before all Israel in their hearing men and women, and children, and strangers, that those which have not known any thing may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the Lord your God, and observe to do all the words of this law. v. 10—13. after which God from a knowledge of their evil imagination, even whilst his daily mercies, salvations, and wonderful miracles were before them, foretells their idolatry and departure from his law, and the punishments which were afterwards inflicted upon them*

*them for the same. ver. 16—18. And as a means to keep alive in their minds, or bring to their remembrance, even in the time of their calamitous slavery and great dispersions, in order to beget repentance and reformation in them, God commands Moses to write that most excellent and divine song contained Ch. xxxii. 1—43. that it might testify against them as a witness which should not be forgotten out of the mouths of their seed. ver. 16—21.*

*And we find that this prophecy concerning them was, as here foretold, too soon verified upon them; for, after Joshua and all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim; and they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the Lord to anger. And they forsook the Lord, and served Baalim and Ashteroth. And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel and he delivered them into hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies. Whithersoever they went out, the hand of the Lord was against them for evil, as the Lord had said, and as the Lord had sworn unto them, and they were greatly distressed.*

*Nevertheless, the Lord raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them. And yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them: they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the Lord: but they did not so. And when the Lord raised them up judges, then the Lord was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge (for it repented the Lord, because of their groanings, by reason of them that oppressed them, and vexed them.) And it came to pass when the judge was dead, that they returned and corrupted themselves more than their fathers, in following other gods, to serve them; and bow down unto them: they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way. And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel; and he said, because*  
that



that this people hath transgressed my covenant which I commanded their fathers, and have not hearkened unto my voice: I will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations which Joshua left when he dyed: that through them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the Lord, to walk therein, as their fathers did keep it, or not. Therefore the Lord left those nations without driving them out hastily, neither delivered he them into the hand of Joshua. . . . And they were to prove Israel by them, to know whether they would hearken unto the commandments of the Lord, which he commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses. Judges ii. 10—23. Ch. iii. 4.

### C H A P. V.

*A recital of exemplary punishments, inflicted on the Israelites, and signal deliverances wrought out for them, whilst they continued under the government of judges, about the space of 350 years.*

**A**N D the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and forgot the Lord their God, and served Baalim, and the groves. Therefore the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he sold them into the hand of Chushan-Rishathaim king of Mesopotamia: and the children of Israel served Chushan-Rishathaim eight years. And when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer to the children of Israel, who delivered them, even Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. And the spirit of the Lord came upon him, and he judged Israel, and went out to war; and the Lord delivered Chushan-Rishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand . . . and the land had rest forty years. And Othniel the son of Kenaz died. Judges iii. 7—11.

And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord; and the Lord strengthened Eglon the King of Moab against Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of the Lord. And he gathered unto him the children of Ammon and Amalek, and went and smote Israel, and possessed the city of palm trees. So the children of Israel served Eglon the king of Moab eighteen years. But when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, the Lord raised them up a deliverer, Ehud the Son of Gera, a Benjamite, . . . and



... and he blew a trumpet in the mountain of Ephraim, and the children of Israel went down with him from the mount, and he before them. And he said unto them follow me ; for the Lord hath delivered your enemies the Moabites into your hand. And they went down after him, and took the fords of Jordan towards Moab, and suffered not a man to pass over. And they slew of Moab at that time about ten thousand men all lusty, and all men of valour ; and there escaped not a man. So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel : and the land had rest fourscore Years. And after him was Shamgar the son of Anath, which slew of the Philistines six hundred men with an ox goad, and he also delivered Israel. Jud. iii. 12—15. 27—31.

And the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord when Ehud was dead. And the Lord sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, that reigned in Hazor ; the captain of whose host was Sisera. ... And the children of Israel cried unto the Lord : for he had nine hundred chariots of iron : and twenty years he mightily oppressed Israel. And Deborah the prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time. ... And Sisera gathered together all *Jabin's* chariots, even nine hundred chariots of iron, and all the people that were with him from Harosheth of the Gentiles, unto the river of Kishon. And Deborah said unto Barak, up ; for this is the day in which the Lord hath delivered Sisera into thine hand : Is not the Lord gone out before thee ? So Barak went down from mount Tabor, and ten thousand men after him. And the Lord discomfited Sisera and all his chariots, and all his hosts with the edge of the sword, before Barak ; so that Sisera lighted down off his chariot, and fled away on his feet. But Barak pursued after the chariots, and after the host, unto Harosheth of the Gentiles ; and all the host of Sisera fell upon the edge of the sword, and there was not a man left. ... So God subdued on that day, Jabin the King of Canaan, before the children of Israel. And the hand of the children of Israel prospered and prevailed against Jabin the king of Canaan, until they had destroyed *him*. And the land had rest forty years. Jud. iv. 1—4. 13—16. 23, 24. ch. v. 31.

And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years. And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel, and because of the Midianites the children  
of

of Israel made them dens which are in the mountains, and caves and strong holds. And so it was, when Israel had sown, that the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east, even they came up against them, and they encamped against them, and destroyed the increase of the earth, till thou come unto Gaza, and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep nor ox, nor ass. For they came up with their cattle and their tents, and they came up as grasshoppers for multitude, for both they and their camels were without number: and they entered into the land to destroy it. And Israel was greatly impoverished, because of the Midianites; and the children of Israel cried unto the Lord. And it came to pass when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, because of the Midianites, that the Lord sent a prophet unto the children of Israel, which said unto them, thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you forth out of the house of bondage, and I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all that oppressed you, and drove them out from before you, and gave you their land; and I said unto you, I am the Lord your God, fear not the gods (*the kings*) of the Amorites in whose land ye dwell. But ye have not obeyed my voice. . . . And the angel of the Lord appeared unto Gideon, and said unto him, the Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour. . . . And the Lord said unto him, surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man. . . . Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites, and children of the east were gathered together, and went over, and pitched in the valley of Jezreel. . . . And the Lord said unto Gideon by the three hundred men that lapped, will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand; and let the other people go every man unto his place. So the people took victuals in their hand, and their trumpets: and he sent all the rest of Israel, every man unto his tent, and he retained those three hundred men: and the host of Midian was beneath him in the valley, and it came to pass the same night, that the Lord said unto him, arise, get thee down unto the host, for I have delivered it into thine hand. . . . And he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and put a trumpet in every man's hand, with empty pitchers and lamps within the pitchers. . . . So Gideon and the three hundred men that were with him,

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came unto the outside of the camp, in the beginning of the middle watch; and they had but newly set the watch, and they blew the trumpets, and broke the pitchers, that were in their hands. And three companies blew the trumpets, and broke the pitchers, and held the lamps in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands to blow withal; and they cried, The sword of the Lord and of Gideon. And they stood every man in his place round about the camp; and all the host ran, and cried, and fled. And the three hundred blew the trumpets, and the Lord set every man's sword against his fellow, even throughout all the host: and the host fled. . . . And the men of Israel gathered themselves together out of Naphthali, and out of Ashur, and out of Manasseh, and pursued after the Midianites. . . . And they took two princes of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeeb: and they slew Oreb upon the rock Oreb, and Zeeb they slew at the wine press of Zeeb, and pursued Midian, and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb, to Gideon on the other side Jordan. Jud. vi. 1—10. 12, 16, 33. Ch. vii. 7, 8, 9, 16, 19—23, 25.

Now Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkar, and their hosts, with them, about fifteen thousand men, all that were left of all the hosts of the children of the east: for there fell an hundred and twenty thousand men that drew the sword. And Gideon went up by the way of them that dwell in tents, on the east of Naboth and Jogbehah, and smote the host: for the host was secure. And when Zebah and Zalmunnah fled, he pursued after them, and took the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, and discomfited all the host. . . . And slew Zebah and Zalmunna, and took away the ornaments that were on their necks. . . . Thus was Midian subdued before the children of Israel, so that they lifted up their heads no more: and the country was in quietness forty years in the days of Gideon. Then the men of Israel said unto Gideon, rule thou over us, both thou, and thy son, and thy son's son also: for thou hast delivered us from the hand of Midian. And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the Lord shall rule over you. Jud. viii. 10, 11, 12, 21, 28, 22, 23.

And it came to pass as soon as Gideon was dead, that the children of Israel turned again, and went a whoring after Baalim, and made Baal-berith their god. And the children of Israel remembered not the Lord their God, who delivered them out of the hands of all their enemies on every side; neither shewed they kindness to the house



of Jerubbaal, namely Gideon, according to all the goodness which he had shewed unto Israel. . . . And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim and Ashteroth, the gods of Syria, and the gods of Zidon, and the gods of Moab, and the gods of the children of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines, and forsook the Lord and served not him. And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he sold them into the hands of the Philistines, and into the hands of the children of Ammon. And from that year, they vexed and oppressed the children of Israel eighteen years, even all the children of Israel that were on the other side Jordan, in the land of the Amorites which is Gilead. Moreover, the children of Ammon passed over Jordan, to fight also against Judah, and against Benjamin, and against the house of Ephraim; so that Israel was sore distressed. And the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, saying, We have sinned against thee, both because we have forsaken our God, and also served Baalim. And the Lord said unto the children of Israel, did not I deliver you from the Egyptians, and from the Amorites, from the children of Ammon, and from the Philistines? The Zidonians also, and the Amalakites, and the Maonites did oppress you, and ye cried to me, and I delivered you out of their hand. Yet ye have forsaken me, and served other gods; wherefore I will deliver you no more. Go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation. And the children of Israel said unto the Lord, we have sinned, do thou unto us whatsoever seemeth good unto thee, deliver us only, we pray, this day. And they put away the strange gods from among them, and served the Lord: and his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel. Then the children of Ammon were gathered together, and encamped in Gilead; and the children of Israel assembled themselves together, and encamped in Mizpeh. And the people and princes of Gilead, said one to another, What man is he that will begin to fight against the children of Ammon? he shall be heard over all the inhabitants of Gilead. . . . Then the spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah, and he passed over Gilead, and Manasseh, and passed over Mizpeh of Gilead, and from Mizpeh of Gilead he passed over to the children of Ammon, . . . to fight against them, and the Lord delivered them into his hands. And he smote Aroer, even till thou come to Minnith, even twenty cities, and unto the plain of the vineyards, with a very great slaughter. Thus the children of Ammon were subdued



subdued before the children of Israel. Jud. viii. 33—35. Ch. x. 6—18. Ch. xi. 29, 32, 33.

And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord delivered them into the hands of the Philistines. Judges, ch. xiii. 1. .... And all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord. And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods, and Ashteroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve him only; and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines. Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim, and Ashteroth, and served the Lord only. And Samuel said, gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the Lord. And they gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured it out before the Lord, and fasted on that day, and said there, we have sinned against the Lord. And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh. And when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel were gathered together to Mizpeh, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel: and when the children of Israel heard it, they were afraid of the Philistines. And the children of Israel said unto Samuel, cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines. And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt offering holy unto the Lord: and Samuel cried unto the Lord for Israel, and the Lord heard him. And as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel; but the Lord thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them, and they were smitten before Israel. And the men of Israel went out of Mizpeh, and pursued the Philistines, and smote them until they came under Bethcar. Then Samuel took a stone, and set it up between Mezpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us. So the Philistines were subdued, and they came no more into the coast of Israel: And the hand of the Lord was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel. And the cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel, were restored to Israel, from Ekron even unto Gath, and the coasts thereof did Israel deliver out of the hands of the Philistines, and there was peace between Israel and the Amorites. And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. 1 Sam. vii. 3—15.

## C. H A P. VI.

*The prophet Samuel's brief summary of what is recited in the foregoing chapter. God's covenant with Israel renewed upon their desiring a king. And the great evil of violating a positive command from any manner of pretences, even from those of a religious nature, set forth in the case of Saul.*

**T**HE many just, exemplary punishments inflicted upon the idolatrous disobedient nation of the Jews, and the signal deliverances so wonderfully wrought out for them upon their repentance and reformation, in the space of 356 years as recited in the foregoing chapter, are by the prophet Samuel briefly summed up in the following words. 1 Sam. xii. 6—25.

And Samuel said unto the people, it is the Lord that advanced Moses and Aaron, and that brought your fathers up out of the land of Egypt. Now therefore stand still, that I may reason with you before the Lord, of all the righteous acts of the Lord, which he did to you and your fathers. When Jacob was come into Egypt, and your fathers cried unto the Lord, then the Lord sent Moses and Aaron, which brought forth your fathers out of Egypt, and made them dwell in this place. And when they forgot the Lord their God, he sold them into the hands of Sisera, captain of the host of Hazor, and into the hand of the Philistines, and into the hand of the King of Moab, and they fought against them. And they cried unto the Lord, and said, We have sinned, because we have forsaken the Lord, and have served Baalim and Ashteroth: but now deliver us out of the hand of our enemies, and we will serve thee, and the Lord sent Jerrubbaal, and Bedan, and Jephtha, and Samuel, and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side, and ye dwelled safe. And when ye saw that Nahash the king of the children of Ammon came against you, ye said unto me, Nay, but a king shall reign over us; when the Lord your God was your king. Now therefore, behold the king whom ye have chosen, and whom ye have desired, and behold the Lord hath set a king over you. If ye will fear the Lord and serve him, and obey his voice, and not rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then shall both ye and also the king that reigneth over you, continue following the Lord your God. But if ye will  
not

not obey the voice of the Lord, but rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then shall the hand of the Lord be against you, as it was against your fathers. Now therefore stand and see this great thing which the Lord will do before your eyes. Is it not wheat-harvest to day? I will call unto the Lord, and he shall send thunder and rain: that ye may perceive and see that your wickedness is very great, which ye have done in the sight of the Lord, in asking you a king. So Samuel called unto the Lord, and the Lord sent thunder and rain that day: and all the people greatly feared the Lord and Samuel, and all the people said unto Samuel, pray for thy servants unto the Lord thy God, that we die not: for we have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king. And Samuel said unto the people, fear not (ye have done all this wickedness: yet turn not aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart; and turn ye not aside; for then should you go after vain things, which cannot profit nor deliver, for they are vain.) For the Lord will not forsake his people, for his great name's sake: because it hath pleased the Lord to make you his people. Moreover, as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord, in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way. Only fear the Lord and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things he hath done for you. But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both you and your king.

*The many instances, which might be collected from scripture, of God's signal dealings with the Jewish nation, under the government of their kings, for their departure from, and breach of his positive commands, I shall leave the serious reader to examine at his leisure. Some perhaps will think, I have been too tedious already in transcribing so much of the solemn covenant which God made with them, and so many instances under the government of their judges: of their captivities and wonderful salvations: but I have done it, that my readers might have the whole history in one view, and because there are too many, who, thro inattention or indifferency to truth, neglect the examination of texts barely referred to, or but briefly quoted. However there is one passage more which I think it cannot be amiss to transcribe, because it plainly sets forth the great evil of neglecting punctually to fulfil the positive appointments and commands of heaven; and at the same time shews, that no kind of*  
plea,

*plea, nor any manner of pretence, tho of a religious nature, as if intended for the honour and service of God, will be admitted by the divine being, as sufficient to excuse, or in the least degree palliate such a sinful neglect, nor so far ward off the displeasure of God, as to prevent his inflicting a just punishment adequate to the offence, even tho the sinner confess his transgression, and shews some signs of repentance; this was the case of Saul concerning the command, which he received from God utterly to destroy the Amalekites. 1 Sam. ch. xv.*

Samuel also said unto Saul, the Lord sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel: now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. Now go, and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass. And Saul gathered the people together, and numbered them in Telaim, two hundred thousand footmen, and ten thousand men of Judah. And Saul came to a city of Amalek, and laid wait in the valley. And Saul said unto the Kenites, Go, depart, get you down from among the Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them; for ye shewed kindness to all the children of Israel, when they came up out of Egypt. So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites. And Saul smote the Amalekites from Havilla, until thou come to Shur, that is over against Egypt. And he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword. But Saul, and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them; but every thing that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly. Then came the word of the Lord unto Samuel, saying, It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king; for he is turned back from following me; and hath not performed my commandments. And it grieved Samuel, and he cried unto the Lord all night. And when Samuel rose up early to meet Saul in the morning, it was told Samuel, saying, Saul came to Carmel, and behold, he set him up a place, and is gone about, and passed on, and gone down to Gilgal. And Samuel came to Saul; and Saul said unto him, blessed be thou of the Lord: I have performed the commandment of the Lord. And Samuel

said



said, what meaneth this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear? And Saul said, they have brought them from the Amalekites; for the people spared the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God, and the rest we have utterly destroyed.

Then Samuel said unto Saul, Stay, and I will tell thee what the Lord hath said to me this night. And he said unto him, say on. And Samuel said, when thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made head of the tribes of Israel, and the Lord anointed thee king over Israel? And the Lord sent thee on a journey, and said, Go, and utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed. Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the Lord, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the Lord? And Saul said unto Samuel, yea, I have obeyed the voice of the Lord, and have gone the way which the Lord sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in Gilgal. And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold to obey is better than sacrifice: and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry: because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king. And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned; for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and thy words; because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice. Now therefore, I pray thee, pardon my sin, and turn again with me, that I may worship the Lord. And Samuel said unto Saul, I will not return with thee; for thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord hath rejected thee from being king over Israel. And as Samuel turned about to go away, he laid hold upon the skirt of his mantle, and it rent. And Samuel said unto him, The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, that is better than thou. And also the strength of Israel will not lie, nor repent; for he is not a man that he should repent. Then he said, I have sinned, yet honour me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel,

Israel, and turn again with me, that I may worship the Lord thy God. So Samuel turned again after Saul, and Saul worshipped the Lord. Then said Samuel, Bring you hither to me Agag the king of the Amalekites: and Agag came unto him delicately. And Agag said, surely the bitterness of death is past. And Samuel said, As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women. And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal. Then Samuel went to Ramah, and Saul went to his house to Gibeah of Saul. And Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death: nevertheless, Samuel mourned for Saul, and the Lord repented that he had made Saul king over Israel.

*Besides this case of Saul, we have another instance where- in the displeasure of God; for the breach of a positive command was shewn; in that remarkable punishment which he so speedily inflicted upon the man of God, who was sent by him to prophecy against the idols altar which Jeroboam made in Bethel. 1 Kings, ch. xiii.*

And here I cannot but observe that tho some persons, who mightily cry up natural religion, and others, who extol moral rectitude and wear the christian name, do notwithstanding pretend, that the positive commands of God under the christian institution namely baptism and the Lord's supper, but more especially the former, are such trifling and insignificant things, that little or no regard is due to them; that they may be wholly omitted, or performed in a manner very different from the divine appointment: yet these signal instances of God's displeasure for the breach of his positive commands are I think sufficient to convince any man that God expects from particular persons, the highest, greatest, and and best of men not excepted: a punctual obedience to all his commands, as the condition of retaining his favour.

In Mr. Killingworth's Supplement we have two other instances of the like nature; one is, the case of Nadab and Abihu who were *devoured by fire from the Lord*; because they put common fire into their censers to offer incense with, instead of fire from off the altar, which was to be always burning for that use. Lev. x. 1, 2. And the other, shews how greatly God was offended with the Jewish nation, for offering their sacrifices upon altars of brick; when he had commanded them to be made of earth, or of unhewn stone Exod. xx. 24.—Isa. lxv. 2, 3. all which plainly and sufficiently prove the great evil of violating the

the positive commands of God ; but for brevity sake I shall only refer my serious readers to what that author says, from p. 47. to p. 52. and shall close this chapter with just observing, that from the passages of scripture herein before quoted, it is manifest, that national prosperity accompanied with all temporal blessings, are promised and bestowed by God upon the public bodies and communities of people, when they have a strict regard to religion and virtue. But as this subject is so excellently handled by our great Archbishop Tillotson, in his sermon upon Prov. xiv. 34. I presume a transcript from thence, will be more acceptable to my readers than any thing I can urge. But first I would just remark, that tho his Lordship does therein chiefly insist on the good and bad effects of virtue and vice, yet he assures us, that he did not use the words of his text in a restrained, but in a comprehensive sense, so as to include all religion and virtue. From whence, and from other expressions in his sermon I cannot help thinking, that he had some view to institute religion, as well as to moral virtue. But whether he had or no, tis sufficient for what I have now in view, which is only to shew by a train of good reasoning, how advantageous religion and virtue are to the public prosperity of a nation : and therefore, I think it is very properly applied to my purpose and the use I afterwards make of it.

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C H A P. VII.

*A Transcript from Archbishop Tillotson, shewing how advantageous religion and virtue are to the public prosperity of a nation.*

**R**ELIGION saith his Lordship, doth not only tend to make every man happy, considered singly and in a private capacity, but is extremely fitted for the benefit of human society.

How much religion tends, even to the temporal advantage of private persons, I shall not now consider, because my text leads me to discourse of the other : namely to shew how advantageous religion and virtue are to the public prosperity of a nation, which I take to be the meaning of this aphorism of Solomon, *Righteousness exalteth a nation, &c.*

And here I shall not restrain righteousness to the particular virtue of justice, (though in this sense also this saying is most true) but enlarge it according to the genius and strain of this book of proverbs, in which the words, wisdom and righteousness are commonly used very comprehensively, so as to signify all religion and virtue. And that this word is so to be taken in the text, may appear further from the opposition of it to sin or vice in general: *Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is the reproach of any people.*

You see then what will be the subject of my present discourse: namely, that religion and virtue are the great causes of public happiness and prosperity.

And tho the truth of this hath been universally acknowledged, and long enough experienced in the world, yet because the fashion of the age is to call every thing into question, it will be requisite to satisfy men's reason about it. To which end I shall do these two things.

1. Endeavour to give an account of this truth.

2. To vindicate it from the pretences and insinuations of atheistical persons.

1. I shall give you a two-fold account of it.

1. From the justice of divine providence.

2. From the natural tendency of the thing.

1. From the justice of the divine providence. Indeed, as to particular persons, the providences of God are many times promiscuously administered in this world: so that no man can certainly conclude God's love or hatred to any person by any thing that befalls him in this life. But God does not deal thus with nations. Because public bodies and communities of men, as such, can only be rewarded and punished in this world. For in the next all public societies and combinations, wherein men are now linked together under several governments, shall be dissolved. God will not then reward or punish nations, as nations; but every man shall then give an account of himself to God, and receive his own reward, and bear his own burden. For altho God accounts it no disparagement to his justice to let particular good men suffer in this world, and pass thro many tribulations into the kingdom of God; because there is another day a coming, which will be a more proper season of rewards, yet in the usual course of his providence, he recompenceth religious and virtuous nations with temporal blessings and prosperity. For which reason St. Austin tells us, that the mighty success and long prosperity of the Romans, was a reward given them by God, for their emi-



ment justice and temperance, and other virtues. And on the other hand, God many times suffers the most grievous sins of particular persons to go unpunished in this world; because he knows that his justice will have another and better opportunity to meet and reckon with them. But the general and crying sins of a nation, unless they be prevented by a general repentance, never scape publick judgments. God may defer his judgments for a time, and give a people a longer space of repentance; he may stay till the iniquities of a nation be full: but sooner or later, his vengeance will overtake them. And usually the longer punishment is delayed, it is the heavier when it comes.

Now all this is very reasonable, because this world is the only season for national punishments. And indeed they are in a great degree necessary, for the present vindication of the honour and majesty of the divine laws, and to give some check to the overflowing of wickedness. Public judgments are the banks and shores upon which God breaks the insolency of sinners, and stays their proud waves. And though among men, the multitude of offenders be many times a cause of impunity; because of the weakness of human governments, which are glad to spare, when they are not strong enough to punish: yet in the government of God, things are quite otherwise. No combination of sinners is too hard for him; and the greater and more numerous the offenders are, the more his justice is concerned to vindicate the affront. However God may pass by single sinners in this world, yet when a nation combines against him, when *hand joins in hand; the wicked shall not go unpunished.*

This the scripture declares to be the settled course of God's providence; that a righteous nation shall be happy. Isa. xxii. 17. *The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever.* And on the other hand, that he useth to shower down his judgments upon a wicked people; *He turneth a fruitful land into barrenness; for the wickedness of them that dwell therein.* Psal. cvii. 34.

And the experience of all ages hath made this good. All along the history of the old Testament, we find the interchangeable providences of God towards the people of Israel always suited to their manners. They were constantly prosperous or afflicted, according as piety and virtue flourished or declined amongst them. And God did

not only exercise this providence towards his own people, but he dealt thus also with other nations. The Roman empire, whilst the virtue of that people remained firm, was strong as iron, as it is represented in the prophecy of Daniel: but upon the dissolution of their manners, the iron began to be mixed with the miry clay, and the feet upon which that empire stood to be broken. And tho God in the administration of his justice, be not tied to precedents; and we cannot argue from scripture examples, that the providences of God towards other nations, shall in all circumstances be conformable to his dealings with the people of Israel; yet thus much may with great probability be collected from them; that as God always blessed that people, while they were obedient to him; and followed them with his judgments, when they rebelled against him: so he will also deal with other nations. Because the reason of those dispensations, as to the main and substance of them, seems to be perpetual, and founded in that which can never change, *viz.* the justice of the divine providence.

2dly, The truth of this further appears from the natural tendency of the thing. For religion in general, and every particular virtue, doth in its own nature conduce to the public interest.

Religion, whenever it is truly planted, is certainly the greatest obligation upon conscience to all civil offices, and moral duties. Chastity and temperance, and industry, do in their own nature tend to health and plenty. Truth and fidelity in all our dealings, do create mutual love, and good will, and confidence among men; which are the great bands of peace. And on the contrary, wickedness doth in its own nature produce many public mischiefs. For as sins are linked together, and draw on one another: so almost every vice hath some temporal inconvenience annexed to it, and naturally following it. Intemperance and lust breed infirmities and diseases, which being propagated, spoil the strain of a nation. Idleness and luxury bring forth poverty and want; and this tempts men to injustice, and that causeth enmities and animosities, and these bring on strife and confusion and every evil work. This philosophical account of public trouble and confusions St. James gives us, Ch. iv. 1. *Whence come wars and fightings among you? are they not hence even from your own lusts, that war in your members.*

But

But I shall shew more particularly, that religion and virtue do naturally tend to the good order, and more easy government of human society: because they have a good influence both upon magistrates and subjects.

1. Upon magistrates. Religion teacheth them to rule over men in the fear of God; because tho they be gods on earth, yet they are subjects of heaven, and accountable to him who is higher than the highest in this world. Religion in a magistrate strengthens his authority, because it procures veneration, and gains a reputation to it. And in all the affairs of this world, so much reputation is really so much power. We see that piety and virtue where they are found among men of lower degree, will command some reverence and respect: but in persons of eminent place and dignity, they are seated to a great advantage; so as to cast a lustre upon their very place, and by a strong reflection to double the beams of majesty. Whereas impiety and vice do strangely lessen greatness, and do secretly and unavoidably derive some weakness upon authority itself. Of this the scripture gives us a remarkable instance in David. For among other things which made *the sons of Zeruiah too hard for him*, this probably was none of the least, that they were particularly conscious to his crimes.

2. Religion hath a good influence upon the people to make them obedient to government; and peaceable one towards another.

1. To make them obedient to government, and conformable to laws; and that not only for wrath, and out of fear of the magistrate's power; which is but a weak and loose principle of obedience, and will cease whenever men can rebel with safety, and to advantage; but out of conscience, which is a firm and constant, and lasting principle, and will hold a man fast, when all other obligations will break. He that hath imbibed the true principles of christianity, is not to be tempted from his obedience and subjection by any worldly consideration; because he believes that *whosoever resisteth authority, resisteth the ordinance of God; and that they who resist shall receive to themselves damnation.*

2. Religion tends to make men peaceable one towards another. For it endeavours to plant all those qualities and dispositions in men, which tend to peace and unity; and to fill men with a spirit of universal love and goodwill. It endeavours likewise to secure every man's interest,



rest, by commanding the observation of that great rule of equity, Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them, by enjoining, that truth and fidelity be inviolably observed in all our words, promises and contracts. And in order hereunto, it requires the extirpation of all those passions and vices, which render men unfociable and troublesome to one another, as pride, covetousness, and injustice, hatred and revenge and cruelty; and those likewise, which are not so commonly reputed vices, as self-conceit, and peremptoriness in a man's own opinion; and all peevishness, and incomppliance of humour in things lawful and indifferent. And that these are the proper effects of a true piety, the doctrine of our Saviour and his apostles every where teacheth us. Now if this be the design of religion, to bring us to this temper; thus to heal the natures of men, and to sweeten their spirits; to correct their passions, and to mortify all these lusts which are the causes of enmity and division; then it is evident, that in its own nature, it tends to the peace and happiness of human society; and that if men would but live as religion requires they should do, the world would be a quiet habitation, a most lovely and desirable place, in comparison of what now it is. And indeed, the true reason why the societies of men are so full of tumult and disorder, so troublesome and tempestuous, is because there is so little of true religion among men; so that were it not for some small remainders of piety and virtue, which are yet left scattered among mankind, human society would in a short space disband and run into confusion; the earth would grow wild and become a great forest, and mankind would turn beasts of prey one towards another. And if this discourse hold true, surely then one would think, that virtue would find itself a seat wherever human societies are, and that religion should be owned and encouraged in the word until men cease to be governed by reason. . . . .

Thus I have endeavoured to evidence and vindicate this truth. I shall only draw an inference or two from this discourse, and so conclude.

1. If this discourse be true, then those who are in place of power and authority are particularly concerned to maintain the honour of religion.

2. It concerns every one to live in the practice of it.

1. To maintain the honour of religion, which doth not only tend to every man's future happiness, but is the best instrument



instrument of civil government and of the temporal prosperity of a nation. For the whole design of it is, to procure the private and public happiness of mankind; and to restrain men from all those things, which would make them miserable and guilty to themselves, unpeaceable and troublesome to the world. Religion hath so great an influence upon the felicity of men that it ought to be upheld, and the veneration of it maintained: not only out of a just dread of the divine vengeance in another world, but out of a regard to the temporal peace and prosperity of men. It will requite all the kindness and honour we can do it, by the advantages it will bring to civil government, and by the blessing it will draw down upon it: God hath promised, that *those that honour him he will honour*; and in the common course of his providence, he usually makes this good. So that the civil authority ought to be very tender of the honour of God and religion, if for no other reason, yet out of reason of state.

It were to be wisht that all men were so piously disposed, that religion by its own authority, and the reasonable force of it, might be sufficient to establish its empire in the minds of men. But the corruptions of men will always make a strong opposition against it. And therefore, at the first planting of the christian religion in the world, God was pleased to accompany it with a miraculous power: but after it was planted, this extraordinary power ceased; and God hath now left it to be maintained and supported by more ordinary and human ways, by the countenance of authority, and the assistance of laws; which were never more necessary than in this degenerate age, which is prodigiously sunk into atheism and profaneness, and is running headlong into an humour of scoffing at God and religion, and every thing that is sacred. For some ages before the reformation, atheism was confined to Italy, and had its chief residence at Rome. All the mention that is of it in the history of these times, the papists themselves give us in the lives of their own popes and cardinals; excepting two or three small philosophers that were retainers to that court. So that this, atheistical humour among christians, was the spawn of the gross superstitions, and corrupt manners of the Romish church and court. And indeed nothing is more natural, than for extremes in religion to beget one another; like the vibrations of a pendulum, which the more violently you swing it one way, the farther it will return the other. But in the last

age, atheism travelled over the Alps, and infected France; and now of late it hath crossed the seas and invaded our nation, and hath prevailed to amazement. For I do not think, that there are any people in the world, that are generally more indisposed to it, and can worse brook it; seriousness and zeal in religion being almost the natural temper of the English. So that nothing is to me matter of greater wonder, than that in a grave and sober nation, profaneness should ever come to gain so much ground, and the best and wisest religion in the world to be made the scorn of fools. For besides the profane and atheistical discourses about God and religion, and the bold and senseless abuses of his sacred book, the great instrument of our salvation, which are so frequent in the public places of resort; I say, besides these, (I speak it knowingly) a man can hardly pass the streets, without having his ears grated and peirced with such horrid and blasphemous oaths and curses as are enough, if we were guilty of no other sin, to sink a nation. And this not only from the tribe that wear liveries, but from those that go before them, and should give better example. Is it not then high time, that the laws should provide by the most prudent and effectual means, to curb these bold and insolent defiers of heaven? who take a pride in being monsters, and boast themselves in the follies and deformities of human nature. The Heathens would not suffer their gods to be reviled, which yet were no gods. And shall it, among the true professors of religion, be allowed to any man to make a mock of him that made heaven and earth, and to breath out blasphemies against him, who gives us life and breath, and all things? I doubt not but hypocrisy is a great wickedness, and very odious to God; but by no means of so pernicious example, as open profaneness. Hypocrisy is a more modest way of sinning, it shews some reverence to religion, and does so far own the worth and excellency of it, as to acknowledge that it deserves to be counterfeited: whereas profaneness declares openly against it, and endeavours to make a party to drive it out of the world.

2. It concerns every one to live in the practice of religion and virtue; because the public happiness and prosperity depends upon it. It is most apparent that of late years, religion is very sensibly declined among us. The manners of men have almost been universally corrupted by a civil war. We should therefore all jointly endeavour to retrieve the ancient virtue of the nation, and bring in-

to fashion again that solid and substantial, that plain and unaffected piety, (free from the extreams both of superstition, and enthusiasm) which flourished in the age of our immediate fore fathers. Which did not consist in idle talk, but in real effects; in a sincere love of God, and of our neighbours: in a pious devotion and reverence towards the divine Majesty, and in the virtuous actions of a good life; in the denial of *ungodliness and worldly lusts*, and in living *soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world*. This were the true way to reconcile God to us, to stop the course of his judgments, and to bring down the blessings of heaven upon us.

God hath now been pleased to settle us again in peace both at home and abroad, and he hath put us once more into the hands of our own council, life and death, blessing and cursing, prosperity and destruction are before us. We may choose our own fortune; and if we be not wanting to ourselves we may under the influences of God's grace and assistance; which is never wanting to our sincere endeavours; become a happy and prosperous people.

The good God make us all wise, to know; and to do the things that belong to the temporal peace and prosperity of the nation; and to the eternal happiness and salvation of every one of our souls, which we humbly beg for the sake of Jesus Christ, to whom, &c.

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C H A P. VIII.

*The Author's use of the last quotation, shewing that it agrees with the christian institution, and his conclusion from the whole.*

**I**F what his lordship so judiciously observed, as recited in the foregoing chapter, *That religion in general and every particular virtue, doth in its own nature conduce to the public interest, is the best instrument of civil government, and naturally tends to the peace and happiness, to the good order and more easy government of human society, to stop the course of God's judgments, and to bring down the blessings of heaven upon them; are the great causes of public happiness, for which in the usual course of providence God recompenceth religious and virtuous nations with temporal blessings and prosperity; if all along the history of the old Testament we*



find the interchangeable providences of God towards the people of Israel always suited to their manners ; so that they were constantly prosperous or afflicted according as piety and virtue flourished or declined amongst them. And if thus much may with great probability be collected from them, That as God always blessed that people while they were obedient to him, and followed them with his judgments when they rebelled against him : so he will also deal with other nations because the reason of those dispensations as to the main and substance of them, seems to be perpetual, and founded in that which can never change, viz. the justice of the divine providence. If the experience of all ages has made this good, If the truth of this has been universally acknowledged and long enough experienced in the world. Nay, If the scripture declares this to be the settled course of God's providence, that a righteous nation shall be happy, Isa. xxxii. 17. And on the other hand, that he useth to shower down his judgments upon a wicked people : or as the Psalmist expresseth it, Psal. cvii. He turneth a fruitful land into barrenness : for the wickedness of them that dwell therein : Then all men, more especially those who are placed in authority, and have the reins of government in their hands, are peculiarly concerned to maintain the honour of religion, in order for their own and the public happiness ; and should therefore most assiduously discountenance a spirit of infidelity and profaneness ; they should never ridicule divine institutions, nor make a jest of the scrupulous and zealous professors of christianity ; but, to the utmost of their power, promote virtue and true religion.

And this reasoning of his lordship is very agreeable to the christian institution which assures us, That *godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.* 1. Tim. iv. 8. In which words I presume, St. Paul alludes to that promise which the great author of our holy religion was pleased to make, when preaching to the multitudes soon after he entered upon his public ministration ; that all temporal comforts, so far as was necessary, would be bestowed by our heavenly Father upon the truly religious. *Take no thought, says he . . . what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, or wherewith all ye shall be clothed. . . . But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.* This seems to have been intended as a motive to excite, and encourage his disciples and followers in the practice



practice of true piety, and to keep them from a too anxious care about the things of this life. But to all those, who from a sincere principle of love to God and to divine truth, preferred his honour and the promotion of his cause before their temporal interest, the favour of friends, or worldly honours, he has promised *manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting*. Mat. xix. 27—30. Mar. x. 28, 31. Luke xviii. 28, 29. And if God bestows such abundant rewards here upon true piety in particular persons, notwithstanding the appointed day of retribution; when such exceeding unspeakable glories are promised to be given them in the future world, what blessings may not be justly expected to descend upon public communities of people, when they are careful to maintain the honour of God by a due regard to religion and virtue, because this world is the only season, in which they can as such be rewarded and distinguished with his favour and blessing? And from hence therefore we may reasonably conclude, according to his lordship's argument in support of his first inference: That 'religion  
' hath so great an influence upon the felicity of men, that  
' it ought carefully to be upheld, and the veneration of  
' it maintained; not only out of a just dread of the di-  
' vine vengeance in another world, but out of a regard  
' to the temporal peace and prosperity of men. It will  
' requite all the kindness and honour we can do it, by  
' the advantages it will bring to civil government, and  
' by the blessings it will draw down upon it. God hath  
' promised that *those that honour him, he will honour*;  
' and in the common course of his providence, he usually  
' makes this good. So that the civil authority ought to  
' be very tender of the honour of God and religion, if  
' for no other reason, yet out of reason of state.'

I will not pretend to say, that if such a reformation in religion was once established, as the Friendly Epistle herewith published, was intended to promote, it would draw down all the blessings of providence upon our land, and be the means under divine influence, notwithstanding former disappointments, to procure us such success against, and victory over all our enemies abroad, as praised be God we have been so signally blessed with over our rebellious enemies at home. But it is remarkable that God bestowed this blessing upon us after our legislators had entered upon a reformation, and had made some progress in

passing a necessary law to prevent profane cursing and swearing, a sin so heinous that it may justly be stiled not only a bold and insolent defiance of heaven, provoking to the Almighty, a scandal and reproach to religion; but also a breach of good manners, for men rudely and audaciously to affront and persecute other peoples ears, with their vile speeches; and by horrid blasphemous oaths and curses, drive those out of their company who never offended them, but are more worthy their respect and imitation for decency of language. An evil highly worthy the cognisance of our legislators to redress. And the law which they have passed to remove such wickedness from our land, has given a general joy and pleasure to all the religious part of the kingdom. And if our reformation be not restrained to this one evil, but is extended as far as the Friendly Epistle, and the nature of the christian religion requires, we might then hope for still further tokens of God's favour. For I think it cannot be denied by any, who believe the Bible, that the nearer we come to, and the more exactly we observe all the appointments and precepts of his holy word, the greater confidence we may have in the divine promises, and the more reason to expect, that he will always give success to our lawful undertakings, by the interposition of his kind and favourable providence in our behalf.

As to the matter of the following *Epistle to the Bishops and Ministers of the Church of England*, I shall say nothing. They to whom it is addressed are able to judge of the reasonableness and fitness of it. My view in reprinting it is to revive the subject, in hopes that if what is therein proposed, as a foundation for the general union and communion of all protestants in this kingdom, should not be thought in every respect so suitable to the present state of things, and the circumstances of our clergy, as might be desired; it may yet be the means to excite some learned prelate, or other able hand, to propound something more effectual for reforming the errors of our established church, and putting an end to those causes of separation from her, consistent with the truth and purity of the Christian institution, both in faith and practice. And this is become the more necessary, because of the advantage which our unhappy mistakes about baptism as well as other things now give, to the prevailing spirit of infidelity; and the great decay of serious religion, which

is almost every where to be seen among us: and which I apprehend, is most likely to be revived again by such a reformation.

As to the livings in the church of England, it is possible our present incumbents may be no sufferers; but if they should in any thing, give up some temporal advantage for the sake of truth, they cannot but know, that God is able, and they have reason to believe, that he will make ample amends to those, who are sincere; because he hath promised *an hundred fold now in this time . . . and in the world to come eternal life*. Mark x. 30.

But whatever our clergy may think, or do in regard to the contents of it, I hope they will all allow, that it was well designed, and that it breathes a true catholic spirit, tho written in a persecuting age. And from the many concessions, which the most eminent and learned christians of all denominations have so often and so frankly made concerning the points in debate between us and those of the baptist persuasion, many of which are to be met with in the Supplement, and in the same author's Remarks before referred to; as well as in other writings upon that subject published from time to time by them. One specimen of this my readers will find in the remarkable letter of that pious prelate Dr. Barlow, recited in the following Friendly Epistle. And I am of opinion, that if the proposals in that Epistle were once agreed to; it would effectually prevent future divisions; and put a speedy end to most of the separations which now subsist; by happily uniting us all in one christian communion. This is a thing most desirable and worthy to be sought after. But I am persuaded it can scarce ever be accomplished, unless it be upon some such plan, as is here proposed; nor ought this attempt to be despised, because it did not proceed from those who were dignified with titles of honour, and placed in high stations amongst men, but from such who were low, and mean, and contemptible in the eye of the world.

And here, in the words of the late worthy and learned Mr. Stennet, \* 'I cannot choose but lament, that so many pious and learned men should find themselves so fettered by the tyranny of custom and tradition, that tho they

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\* Answer to Ruffen, p. 189.

cannot but aspire after the liberty of practising the ordinances of Christ, according to the primitive pattern; and now and then let go some sighs and wishes, to express the sense of their minds on this head; yet they seem to want that degree of resolution, and firmness of mind, which is necessary to attempt such a reformation.

Too many are afraid of the consequences of altering old traditions, and seem rather disposed to tolerate abuses, than to redress them: not enough considering, that it is every man's duty to reform his own practice, and to endeavour to reform that of others, so far as he is capable in his station; that there can be no good excuse framed, to palliate the violation of plain institutions; that the long or general practice of a custom that wants a foundation in the word of God, makes the reasons that are urged for a reformation so much the stronger; and that whatsoever names of reproach may be given to those, who have the courage to stem the tide of vulgar errors and abuses, they act an honourable part in espousing the cause of truth, which is the cause of God; *For those who honour him, he will honour.*





A  
FRIENDLY EPISTLE  
TO THE  
BISHOPS and MINISTERS  
OF THE  
Church of ENGLAND;  
FOR

Plain Truth and sound Peace

BETWEEN

The Pious Protestants of the Church of ENGLAND,  
and those of the Baptised Believers.

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Written with the Advice of divers Pastors and Brethren of  
the Baptised Congregations,

By THO. GRANTHAM.

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HEB. xii. 14.

*Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no  
man shall see the Lord.*

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First Printed in the Year 1680.

FRIENDLY EPISTLE

TO THE

BISHOPS and MINISTERS

OF THE

Church of ENGLAND;



Plain Truth and Peace

BETWEEN

The Protestants of the Church of England,  
and those of the separated Brethren.

Agreement with the views of others, English and Brethren,  
the separated Congregations, and others.

By THO. GRANTHAM.

1850.

Printed by the Rev. J. G. Smith, at the  
press of the Rev. J. G. Smith, at the

Printed in the Year 1850.

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T H E  
P R E F A C E  
T O T H E  
R E A D E R.

**T**HE complaint is both great and just, that christians are so divided amongst themselves, that it's hard for an impartial christian to find where to fix for his own comfortable society. And this calamity is much aggravated by the backwardness of each party to offer any thing to accommodate these differences, each expecting rather that their opposites should wholly conform to their sentiments, and relinquish their own.

And what may be thought (in that case) of this present overture we cannot certainly divine, nor will be too confident that there is nothing of that nature in it. But of this we will be confident, that the things here desired, do carry much of their reasonableness in the very nature of them, and have their approbation both from the sacred word, and the works of those to whom they now address themselves for a christian compliance.

But it will be said, *What are the men that make this overture?*

Our answer is, We are the servants of the living God ; or, We are christians ; and having seen the discords and ruins which have befallen the christian nations, do heartily desire those breaches may be made up. And as it is not, so 'tis hoped it will not be deemed, any transgression of the law of God or man for any christians to seek for peace one with another in the \* *truth*, notwithstanding their differing circumstances in respect of worldly honours, or the disparity of their education ; seeing they ought all to *be clothed with humility ; the strong to bear the infirmity of the weak, and not to please themselves. The brother of high*

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\* By truth in this place we intend chiefly what is needful to a true church-state, and an holy life.

degree to rejoyce in that he is made low, and the chief to become servant to the rest.

When Paul heard of the divisions which happened in the church at Corinth, how does he blame them for their carnality as the cause, and bestir himself to recover their unity, in the truth *which at first they had received?* 1 Cor. i. 10. *Now I beseech you brethren by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that ye be perfectly joyned together, in the same mind, and in the same judgment.* Referring them to the foundation, and rule of all christian unity, that only *Christ was crucified for them; that Christ is not to be divided; and that they were baptized in the name of Christ, and that therefore they should not follow any man, but as he follows Christ.*

But it seems this great apostle did not live to see an end of their divisions, as appears not only from the close of his last epistle to them, 2 Cor. xii. 20, 21. but also from the epistle of Clement (who survived him) which he wrote upon the occasion of that *ungodly sedition* (so he calls it) which had kindled among them *through pride and self-love*, which he vehemently laboured to extinguish by many arguments, but specially by reducing them to the blessed example of Christ their leader, and the practise of such as lived after a godly sort. His words are these:

“ Christ Jesus our Lord the scepter of the majesty of God,  
 “ came not in vain boasting of arrogance and pride, al-  
 “ though he could do all things, but in humility of mind,  
 according as the holy spirit had spoken concerning him.  
 “ — See, beloved friends, what an example is given  
 “ unto us: for if the Lord was so humble, what shall we  
 “ do, who are come under the yoke of his grace? —  
 “ let us stick to these therefore who live godly and peace-  
 “ ably, and not to them who hypocritically only seem to  
 “ desire peace: for somewhere he saith, they blessed with  
 “ their mouth, but with their heart they cursed; —  
 “ for their heart was not right with him, neither were  
 “ they stedfast in his covenant.”

Now if the points in controversy among the christians at Corinth, were of as great moment as ours (as that may be made evident; \*) then 'tis as rational for us to seek for concord each with other, as it was for Paul and Clement

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\* 1 Cor. iii. 3, 4. and xi. 18, 19, 20, 21. and xv. 12, 19. 2 Cor. xii. 20, 21. see also Clem. Ep. at large and it will fully appear.



to seek to unite them. And hence we are the more desirous to make this present overture for christian amity with the pious protestants in the church of England, for divers causes : And first ;

As it is very evident there hath been a great departure from the simplicity of the gospel (both in the form and power of it) since the plantation of it in the world by Christ and his apostles ; so also it is certain that many good men in ages past, as well as in this present age, have still been labouring (and that often-times under great trials) for the restoration of the truth to its purity, some in one point, and some in another more especially.

And here the English protestant hath been as active as others, some in reforming divers things in doctrine and practice ; others in keeping the ground they have gained, against the opposers of reformation.

Now this work (as it is of God,) ought to be carried on in the nations of the world to its perfection. Namely, till the truths of the gospel be delivered from all humane innovations which have incumbered it, to the disturbance of the peace of christians in all ages since they found opportunity to crowd themselves into the service of God.

But the great obstruction of this work of reformation, has been the falling out of the reformers among themselves. And this is the case of the sober protestant, and the baptised believer, in this age and nation : the latter not so honouring the first as he ought, with respect to what God hath done by him ; and the former despising the latter, by whom God is pleased (notwithstanding) to bring to light some antient truths which the former overslipped, or took not due notice of. And by this impatience and disrespect in each towards other, they prove inimical to the very work, which in the main they both design to promote.

It is the way of ingenuous men in reviving decayed arts, to honour their predecessors, though inferior to themselves, and to encourage those that succeed to attempt things more excellent. Why are not christians as ingenuous in their endeavours to restore decayed religion ? There is nothing in the author of our profession, or the profession itself, but candor and ingenuity. Wherefore if we intend the furtherance of the work of reformation, hitherto carried on through manifold afflictions, let us timely consider our common interest, which is to make one shoulder to defend what our ancestors have worthily

atcheived ; as also to joyn our industry for the restoration of every truth which they omitted.

2. Our second motive shall respect the 39 articles of the church of England, in which if a few things (which are not of the substance of the christian religion) were explained or amended, it were a very easy thing for the church of England, and the baptised believers of this nation, to compose their differences in a point of doctrine and faith, as touching the basis, or foundation of the christian religion. And the intent that unity may be herein attained between us, we shall humbly beg leave with plainness to shew (when we offer our proposals) the particulars whereof we are doubtful in some of the said articles.

Our third motive to seek for concord with the pious protestant, is the contents of that remarkable \* letter, long since sent to Mr. J. Tombes, B. D. (upon occasion of his learned disputations concerning the restauration of holy baptism to its primitive use) and written by that reverend man Dr. Barlow, now lord bishop of Lincoln, which verbatim is as followeth :

*— I am a friend to your person (whom I have known (though unknown to you) this thirty-one years) and to your opinion too (as to the main of it); for I believe and know, that there is neither precept nor practice in scripture for paedobaptism, nor any just evidence for it, for about two hundred years after Christ. The first who bears witness to infant baptism practised in the church, is Tertullian, but so, as he expressly dislikes and condemns it as an unwarrantable and irrational custome. And Nazianzen a good while after him in his Oration in ἡλικίᾳ βαπτισμῶν, dislikes it too, and would not have infants brought to baptism till they were of some age, and able to answer for themselves. Sure I am that in the primitive times they were first to be catechumeni, and then Θεοδιδίται, illuminati, or baptizati, and this not only children of pagans, or pagans converted, but children of christian parents, Nazianzen (though a bishop's son) being not baptized till he was about thirty years of age, as appears in his life ; and the like is evident of some others. The truth is, infant baptism did (how or by whom I know*

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\* This letter has been printed about twenty-four years, and never yet contradicted by Dr. Barlow. See Mr. Tombes's preface to the reader in the third part of his full review of the dispute concerning infant baptism, p. 8, 9.

not) come in, in the second century, and in the third and fourth began to be practised, though not generally, and defended as lawful from that text (grossly misunderstood) *Joh. iii. 5.* Upon the like gross mistake of *Joh. vi. 53.* they did for many centuries (both in the Greek and Latin church) communicate infants, and give them the Lord's supper, and I confess they might do both as well as either: but altho they baptized some infants, and thought it lawful so to do, yet *Austin* was the first that ever said it was necessary *inde durus pater infantum.* I have seen what my learned and worthy friend *Dr. Hammond*, *Mr. Baxter* and others say in defence of it, and I confess I wonder not a little that men of such great parts should say so much to so little purpose, for I have not yet seen any thing like an argument for it.

And not only this letter, but many other testimonies which are found in the writings of learned protestants \* to the same purpose (as hath been shewn by divers hands in our books now extant) do greatly perswade us to hope, that the controversies about baptism draw towards an end, and were this point well agreed, many other things would be therewith so moderated, as that we should (by God's help) approach that blessing, to have one heart and one way.

4. Our fourth motive is taken from the great dread which seems to be at present upon this land, of the *encroachment of popery*: but what is in this God knoweth, nor shall we concern ourselves with secrets. And seeing it is rational to believe, that nothing shall sooner bring such fears and heavy judgments upon us, than dissensions and divisions (in which there is too much dissenting from the truth) therefore do we the more earnestly desire to dispose our minds to unite in truth and charity, with all such as love God and their neighbour, and walk according to the general rules of christianity: resolving to bear what (with a good conscience) may be born for peace sake in the truth, in which we shall (upon a friendly and free debate) be agreed.

Our last and principal motive, is, That hereby God shall be glorified, in the furtherance of a faithful and im-

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\* *Mr. Baxter* tells us, many both papists and prelatists, have maintained that infant baptism is not determined in scripture, but depends on the tradition of the church. *Def. Princ. of Love*, p. 7. And *Dr. Jer. Taylor* tells us, there is no prime tradition for infant baptism. See his *Disswas. from Popery*.

partial reformation of life and religion, when we who have had so great a share in contending one against another, shall after a christian and manly sort, cease our conflicts each with other, by stooping to what of sincere truth hath appeared in our disputes: and not leave our divisions hereditary to our posterity, but rather a pious example of our charity to be by them pursued.

For seeing it is a rational presumption, that there hath been said what well can be said, on both sides; what then remains but that we bend our minds to cease our strife by such a christian compliance, as may justly render us willing to be overcome by truth on both parts, where the matter shall require it.

And herein let none so much consult his own glory as the good christians in general; as it is written, *Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth.* And again, *Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.* And let that christian speech of Clement come to mind and conclude this Preface:

*Is there any one then (saith he) that is bravely spirited among you? Is there any one that hath compassion? Doth any one abound with charity? Let him say, If this contention (sedition or schism) be for me, or by my means, I will depart, I will go my ways whithersoever you please; I will do what the rest commands. Only the sheepfold of Christ enjoy peace with \* the elders which God hath placed over it. He that shall do this, shall purchase to himself great glory in the Lord, and every place shall receive him.*

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\* Note, that the division at Corinth was occasioned by laying aside the primitive institution of Christ concerning the ministry, the ancient bishops or elders being thrust out, &c. And our divisions are occasioned by either the laying aside, or the not duly observing Christ's ordinances touching the constitution and government of his church according to the primitive pattern.



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The Author's Prayer to God, for his Blessing  
upon this present endeavour for concord  
amongst Dissenting Christians.

**O** Most mighty, most holy, and most gracious God! What are we that we should speak unto thee, the God of heaven and earth? We beseech thee pardon our unworthiness, and for the sake of Christ our Saviour, hear this prayer, which in his name we do with our whole heart, pour out before thy majesty.

O Lord, in thy fatherly compassion behold the sad divisions which have befallen the christian people throughout the whole world. And seeing nothing is too hard for thee, graciously be pleased to move upon the hearts of all sober and heavenly minded christians (however differing in some points concerning the christian profession) and so work by the spirit of power, love and wisdom, that they may be so united in brotherly affection, as speedily to consider one another in love: and have compassion one of another under their unhappy differences in opinion. O destroy the spirit of pride and BLOODTHIRSTINESS from amongst the christian people. And let all that are called by that name be ashamed that ever such wrath hath been found amongst them, and let them be humbled before thy majesty in the remembrance of it, O Lord, we beseech thee.

Most gracious God, we confess unto thee, we are not worthy to undertake any thing in behalf of the peace and unity of divided christians: but thou (O God) that despisest not the base and weak things of the world, be intreated to bless our present enterprize, as it is consistent with thy pleasure, to the good of thy people universally; that they may be one in truth and peace, according to thy word, which is truth.

We beseech thee to bow the heart of the mighty, the wise and honourable in the christian nation, to study truth and peace, to condescend to any thing for thy glory and thy peoples happiness: and we pray, that none who are called by thy name, may be any longer puffed up, for one, and against another. O teach those that love thee to strive together with one mind for the truth and power of religion according to the gospel.

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Good Lord, be intreated for thy name's sake, in behalf of all those that are of pious meaning, in these nations especially, that their hearts being intirely knit together in the great and more necessary parts of thy worship, they may glorify thy name with one consent, by a charitable forbearance, in things which are not sinful in thy sight.

We entreat thee (our God) make us thy servants ever to be ready on our parts, to evidence by act, what here we propose in words; and grant thy spirit to enable us herein to serve thee, and all such as fear thee, and love thy testimonies.

And grant that none of thy people may uncharitably censure this our undertaking for concord amongst thy servants. Grant them patience to consider what is here offered, and wherein we may seem deficient herein, lead others to supply what is wanting, that through thy blessing upon our united endeavours, the good here intended may be prosperously promoted, to thy praise, O Lord, to the great increase of charity, and therewith to the true comfort of thy people throughout the whole world. Even so, Lord God Almighty; Even so. Amen.

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FRIENDLY EPISTLE

To all the

BISHOPS and MINISTERS

OF THE

Church of ENGLAND.

*Reverend Sirs,*

**M**AY it please you in the meekness and gentleness of Christ, to lay aside (a little) those exterior honours which are conferred upon you, and to condescend to men of low degree, and in that condescension seriously to ponder, what is herein with humility and sincerity submitted to your consideration.

We do seriously account it a part of our infelicity, to see the distractions and divisions, which are in our land, about things relating to the worship of God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ; and therewithal it is too evident that the power of godliness is much neglected, and the ways of christianity greatly depraved, whereupon many that love the Lord Jesus, are so estranged among themselves, as to become adversaries to their own peace, and the comfort of each other.

May it then please God, to lead us all to the consideration of these ill effects, and to remove the causes of them. And seeing we may perhaps be under worse apprehensions concerning one another, than there is real cause for, let it be calmly considered on both parts, that our greatest differences are about *ceremonies*; and those also of *human device* (as we conceive) the best of which are not worth the loss of one soul, and therefore in no wise fit to adventure the breach of our peace and christian concord,

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for their sake which may be the cause of perishing to many.

May it therefore seem well pleasing to you, the bishops of the church of England, with your brethren of the ministry, to admit of some friendly and free debate with the bishops and teachers of the baptized churches in this nation; to try if by any means a way may be found to bring us to christian concord in the gospel of God.

To effect this, is either impossible, or difficult only. Not the first, since our differences lie not in the doctrinal part of any foundation-article of the christian religion, so much as in the application or practick part of them.

For to touch a little the grand points about which we differ, viz. *sacred baptism*, and the *discipline of the church*, of these we speak the same thing; for thus you teach, *That in baptism there is an inward and spiritual grace, and an outward and visible sign; and that repentance, whereby we forsake sin, and faith whereby we stedfastly believe the promises of God made to us in that sacrament, are the things required of all persons that are to be baptized\**. And hereunto we do most heartily subscribe.

And touching holy discipline, your doctrine is, that the manner of proceeding in *excommunication*, is *first by gentle admonition, and that once or twice given with the spirit of meekness, if the fault be not notoriously known: and next by open reprehension, afterwards by publick sentence of the church to put him from the company of the faithful, to deliver him to satan, to denounce him an heathen and a publican, if no admonitions will serve, and the crimes be very offensive*. To this doctrine likewise we do give our full consent.

Nevertheless it must be granted a very great difficulty (as things now stand) to reform what is really amiss on your part in the practice relating to those two points of the christian religion; especially seeing that the worldly interest of so many carnal-minded men, seems to depend upon the continuation of the errors which have befallen you in the practice of these holy institutes.

Howbeit this difficulty is not greater than it was to reform, what was as really amiss in that great ordinance, the Lord's table, whether we consider their error who for many centuries gave the communion to infants; or theirs, who by their *transubstantiation* destroy the very nature of the sacrament.

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\* See your church catechism.



Nor shall we here forget, but thankfully remember the great travel and sufferings of your martyrs, and the pious zeal, which appeared in many of them when called to reduce that holy ordinance of the *Lord's supper* from many corruptions, by which it had been prophaned.

But yet we must needs condole their shortness, in not looking with like diligence into the pristine purity of the other sacrament. By which oversight, we which survive them, are exposed the more to our present difficulties. And hence we may borrow that passage in 1 Chron. xv. 13. *Because ye did it not at the first, therefore the Lord our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order.* And here we ought to learn, that seeing God would not indulge his servant *David* in such an oversight (when yet his intention was very pious) he will have his own methods duly observed in things pertaining to his service.

Your wisdoms know very well who hath said, *A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump*; and that *every plant which the heavenly Father hath not planted, must be rooted up*; and how vain the worship (even of the true God) is esteemed by *Christ*, which is taught by the precepts of men? All which cries aloud that religion be restored to its primitive purity, that so men may give unto God the things that are God's, and cease to serve him with their own inventions.

What we shall here propose to these holy ends, is no more than what at present we conceive to be very needful; howbeit we may not prescribe to you, but only offer an occasion to your wisdoms to consider us as christians, not as enemies. For it is evident that those coercive ways which some incline to, and under which we have been, and still are exercised, are not like to effect christian amity and unity, but rather to make the breach much wider.

That then it may please God (even the God of peace) to direct your wisdoms to those wholesome methods, which may be natural to procure and continue a lasting peace between us in the truth of the gospel, shall be our prayer to him for you, and in whose fear we humbly make these following proposals. And first.

I. *Concerning the thirty-nine Articles, &c.*

As we have already hinted, that (in our judgment) some things in the thirty-nine articles of the church do admit of some amendment, we shall therefore humbly propose our

doubts in that case, that the fundamentals being secured, other things may the more easily be reconciled.

1. Our first scruple concerns the third article, where it requires, belief that Christ went down into hell, besides his being in the state of the dead, and buried in the sepulchre. Now this passage is so dubious, as that even Mr. Rogers, who wrote a book in defence of the thirty-nine articles, doth confess, that the native and undoubted sense of this article is not known, so that we conceive it ought not to be required as an article necessary to the christian \* faith.

2. In the eighth article all things contained in the three creeds, are required [thoroughly to be believed,] in some of which, is the said clause, of *Christ's descension into hell*, (the meaning whereof is doubtful.) And some terms in the creed of Athanasius, are so hard to be understood, that we think they ought not to be imposed as necessary: we humbly conceive the modesty of Hillary, more safe than some of the zealous speeches of Athanasius, who tells us "that † whatsoever is used more than the *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Ghost*, is beyond the compass of speech, the reach of sense, and the capacity of understanding." And though he had used the words [*three hypostasis*] yet confesses "This is to do things unlawful, to speak that which ought not to be spoken, to attempt things not licensed, to put things in peril of the speech of men, which ought to be kept in the religiousness of minds." And Austin confesses that *it ought not to be spoken*, [how] *the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three*. A holy Trinity there is, but [how] it subsisteth God only knoweth.

And here both the modesty and caution of Mr. Calvin also, is worth our consideration, who speaking of the titles, or expressions, viz. *a Trinity of persons in the unity of the Godhead*, saith,

*If the names have not been without cause invented, we ought to take heed that in rejecting them we be not justly blamed of proud presumptuousness. I would to God (saith he) they were so buried indeed, so that THIS FAITH*

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\* And it is granted by learned protestants, that this clause of Christ's descent into hell, was not always in the fourth article of the creed, as the Nicene creed, and divers others do witness. See Mr. Rosi's *Abridgment of Divinity*, page 115.

† See Mr. Calvin's *Instit. L. I. Chap. xiii. Sect. 5.* out of whom this quotation is taken.

WERE AGREED OF ALL MEN, *that the Father, and Son and Holy Ghost are ONE GOD, and yet that the Father is not the Son, nor the Holy Ghost the Son, but distinct by certain properties.* Instit. l. i. c. 1. sect. 5.

3. The thirteenth article would have it believed, *that no works done without faith in Jesus Christ, are pleasant to God, &c.* which we think is doubtful, considering how it is said that *the prayers and alms of Cornelius were come up for a memorial before God.* Acts x. 1, 2, 3. yet it is certain he did not then know Jesus Christ.

4. The eighteenth article seems doubtful, where it teacheth, *that none can be saved who diligently frame their life according to the light or law of nature, &c.* Whereas if God have given them no other law or light to walk by, we conceive it more safe for us to leave them to the Lord (who will not gather where he hath not strewed) than thus to censure them.

5. The second paragraph of the twenty-seventh article may be well omitted, seeing it is granted by learned protestants, that there is no *plain scripture for infant baptism.* Instead of which paragraph it may safely be inserted, that the infants of christians should be devoted to God by prayer and blessing, which may be justified by the law of nature, and specially by the words of Christ. *Mat. xix. 6.*

6. The thirty-sixth article not necessary to be imposed as an article of the christian faith, seeing that *book of consecration of archbishops, bishops, ordering of priests and deacons,* is not of divine authority; and it must needs be more safe to refer the business of consecration, or ordaining Christ's ministers (of what rank soever) to the rules given in the holy scripture.

And hence we do further conceive, it is very needful that those severe sentences of excommunication contained in the book of *canons and constitutions ecclesiastical* (especially these two, contained in *Can. 4. and 9.*) be recalled. For seeing they themselves (that composed the thirty-nine articles) were but men, though pious men, (and therefore (as themselves teach, *Art. 21.*) *might possibly err, even in things pertaining to God.* Therefore (as they further say) *things ordained by them, have neither strength nor authority, unless it may be declared, that they be taken out of the word of God.* Nor ought the church to enforce any thing to be believed for necessity of salvation, which is either *against or besides the word of God,* as they also teach, *Art. 20.* Thus much of the thirty-nine articles.



II. *Concerning the visible church of Christ.*

1. As it is rightly acknowledged by christians generally, and particularly by those of the church of England, *Art.*

19. *That the church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments duly administred according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things which of necessity are requisite to the same;* so it may be as truly observed that none be admitted members of this visible church, or mystical body of Christ; till they give evidence that they are faithful, at least by their personal profession of the faith of Christ; and willingness to walk in newness of life, according to the principles or general rules of the christian religion, contained in the holy scriptures, the rule of faith.

2. And seeing it is the work of God through which man with the heart believeth unto righteousness, from which faith only can proceed that confession with the mouth which is to salvation; that therefore it may be firmly agreed, that human force or violence is not the means ordained of God to propagate the church of Christ. But that preaching the gospel, and walking holily in charity towards all men, are the true and proper means to encrease the church according to the will and commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations in that behalf.

III. *Concerning regeneration and baptism.*

1. That as conversion or regeneration is necessary to the christian state of every sinner, so it may be jointly held and professed that the baptism of repentance, for remission of sins, is an ordinance of Christ, and necessary to the admission of all men to the privileges of his church: and that the things required of all that are to be baptized, are repentance whereby they forsake sin, and faith, whereby they stedfastly believe the promises of God, made to them in that sacrament.

2. That as it is granted on all hands, that *immersion* in water agrees best with the word *baptize*, and was the *primitive way of baptizing*: so this ordinance may therein be restored to its purity according to its primitive institution; and that to this end, there may be *baptisterions*, or *fit places, to baptize in*, appointed for the solemn performance of this ordinance.

IV. *Concerning infants, or little children.*

1. That all infants of christians be solemnly devoted to Christ by prayer and blessing, and that the ministers of

Christ



Christ be assistant in this work, not forbidding them this blessing, *Mat. xix. 13, 14.*

2. That every minister of Christ residing in any country-village be obliged, in consideration of convenient maintenance, to teach all the children in his precincts to read the holy scriptures, and to instruct them in the principles of the christian religion (*Heb. vi. 1, 2.*) and that they may be baptized, when they shall profess repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. And that the like care be used in cities, and great towns, in such manner as may be most convenient.

V. *Concerning laying on of hands, by some called confirmation.*

1. That the fourth principle of Christ's doctrine (called *laying on of hands*;) be restored to its due use and purity in the church; namely, that when any converts are baptized, then prayer with the *laying on of hands*, be speedily made to God for them, that they may receive the promise of the spirit by faith, and that it may retain its ancient titles, given it by the Holy Ghost, (*viz.*) *laying on of hands*, or a principle of the doctrine of Christ.

2. To the end this service of God be not neglected, that it may be allowed, that all faithful overseers of particular congregations, may perform this service upon the newly baptised; specially in the absence of such a minister as has a more general charge, be he called the angel, or messenger of the churches. And that care be taken that the christians who have not known this principle of Christ's doctrine, be deliberately instructed concerning it, before they be made conformable to it.

VI. *Concerning publick prayers, and the manner of singing the praises of God in the churches. And of the removal of such ceremonies as serve not to edification.*

1. Seeing the prayers contained in holy scripture (and especially the Lord's Prayer) are sufficient to direct the man of God in that duty of prayer in the church, that therefore the book of common prayer be not imposed, and that it may be in the liberty of the minister to pray in the church according to the ability which God hath given him, that so the spirit of prayer, as well as the order of it, may be preserved.

2. That it be jointly agreed that singing the praises of God in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, is a holy ordinance of God, and that the order and spirit of that duty be restored (God assisting) according to *1 Cor. xiv.* and other rules contained in the holy scripture. And that  
musical

musical instruments, bowing to the altar, the sign of the cross, the surplice, or any other, unnecessary ceremony, be prudently removed out of the service of God in all churches.

VII. *Concerning church-discipline.*

1. That the exercise of discipline be restored in all churches according to the scriptures, and the doctrine of the church of England, before recited in this epistle.

2. To the intent that no sinner be indulged in his iniquity for money, that it may not be permitted that any officer concerned in the execution of discipline, take any manner of fees of the offenders, or any other person for them: and that such ministers be entrusted with the exercise of discipline, as are men of known integrity, holiness and self-denial. And that holy discipline be executed in or near the places where the offences are committed, according to the order of the primitive churches.

VIII. *Concerning ordination and preaching the word.*

1. That the election and ordination of ministers, of what rank soever, be restored (wherein it shall appear to have been neglected) in the most solemn manner that may be, according to the scriptures: and that such ministers, among the baptized believers, as shall be found to have been so elected and ordained, be allowed to preach the gospel, to edify the people, and to dispense the holy ordinances.

2. That the primitive liberty of prophesying to edification, exhortation, and comfort, be restored to the church, *i. e.* as it shall please God to give men the gift of teaching, exhortation, &c. they may be permitted with prudence to edify the people by the modest exercise of their gifts in the churches.

IX. *Concerning the maintenance of Christ's ministers, and the relief of poor christians.*

1. That it be agreed, that the relief of the poor, and that those who preach the gospel should live of the gospel, are God's ordinances, and to be performed with all faithfulness by all christians according to their ability. But that the methods for performance of them, are tythes for the one, or assessment for the other, is only *jure humano*, and that therefore the same power magistratical which gave being to these methods may lawfully alter the same to the better, when they please.

2. And that therefore it be further agreed and declared, that the way assigned in holy scripture for the support of  
Christ's

Christ's ministers, and the relief of poor christians, is by a free contribution, to be constantly upheld in the churches, according to every one's ability; and the money so collected to be entrusted in the hands of the deacons of the church, and by them to be faithfully distributed as occasion requires. And that therefore such as will stand to Christ's allowance, and for his name-sake minister the gospel freely to the Gentiles, may be still had in reputation; and sent forth by the church to restore christianity where it is corrupted; and to plant the gospel where it is not known.

X. Concerning separation.

1. It's here propounded, as greatly necessary to a true christian state, that some effectual course be resolved upon, to keep (as far as may be consistent with truth and charity) a holy and just distinction, between those who lead wicked and scandalous lives, and them that live holily, according to the general rules of christianity, without respect of persons.

2. That this care be taken more especially concerning the ministry; otherwise we shall still have multitudes of prophane and debauched men set up as leaders. And we see by experience the people are too ready to follow their ill examples, and the consequence must needs be lamentable; as it is written, *They eat up the sins of my people; and set their heart on their iniquities, and there shall be like people like priest; and I will punish them for their ways, and reward them their doings.* Jer. xv. 18.

II. Concerning the means to effect the unity desired.

1. That it would please you, the bishops of the church of England, to petition the King's majesty, that it may be made lawful by an act of parliament, or by his royal permission, for a competent number of representatives of such dissenters, as have a mind to unite with the church of England, to meet in christian counsel with your selves, and to agree (upon mature deliberation) on such articles as may (if God see it good) put a period to our present animosities and divisions.

2. That if these proposals do not hold agreement with the good old way of christianity, then we desire they may be rejected, and that you would be pleased to propose things which may be more effectual to procure the unity desired. For our record is on high, and we have also the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity, and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we desire to have our conversation in the gospel with you,



and with all that love Christ in our nation. Trusting in the Lord, that the uniting of such in the truth in general, may effectually move many to jealousy with themselves, who are now entangled in error, or involved in prophane-ness, that they may be converted from the evil of their ways, and consequently our nation to abound with all blessings, especially the blessing of the gospel of peace. *For godliness hath the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.*

Finally, If these endeavours for christian concord with all that fear God, and work righteousness in this nation, be rejected, yet herein shall we have some peace and comfort, that we have made the best essay we could for brotherly concord with them: *Being also seriously desirous utterly to forget all the hard things which in time past we have suffered from our country men.* Hoping that the sober protestant hath had good occasion by this time to observe, that God Almighty hath pleaded the innocency of our principles and purpose, from the evils too frequently and most unjustly suggested against them; and that therefore we may now with the greater freedom of speech, express our selves as in the premises, and conclude with the modest speech of *Augustine.*

*\* This then is our desire, which we do alledge by these letters unto your Reverence, First, if it may be that you would confer with our bishops peaceably and quietly, to the end that error be taken away from those in whom it shall be found, and not that men be taken away, and not punished, but gently corrected.*

But before we shut up this epistle, it will be needful to answer two objections which may seem to be of great force against what we have said.

*Obj. 1. It will be objected, That we ask or desire many things, and grant but few.*

*Ans. 1.* That we hope we have desired nothing but what is rational, according to the sound principles of christianity; and which will be profitable to the church of God, when granted.

2. We stand ready to hear what our friends of the church of England, will require of us, to answer those kindnesses which we desire of them, and hope we shall deny them nothing which we may lawfully grant.



2. *Obj.* That the alteration which we propose in the case of baptism, amounts to a renunciation of their christianity, and to begin anew to become christians.

*Ans.* The church of England does not only retain the substance of what truth she hath received concerning baptism, by altering to the better; but will indeed then be consistent with the truth of her own doctrine in the first paragraph of her twenty-seventh article, and her vulgar catechism, which she hath rather made void hitherto by the custom of pædobaptism.

2. If we take the text, *Acts. xix. 5.* according to the exposition of antients, and divers modern writers (as that is indeed the native and clear sense of the place) it will then be a good president to the church of England to alter the subject and manner of her baptism; for here we see, these Ephesians being not rightly instructed concerning the grounds of baptism, when they were baptized unto John's baptism, are therefore baptized again, upon more perfect instruction; yet did they not renounce the least part of christianity, nor any truth which they had received concerning baptism; but did rather perfect that imperfect baptism which they had received. And it is a just presumption, that their first baptism was more valid than pædobaptism, since infants know nothing at all, either what they do, or what is done to them, but oppose it what in them lieth, whereas these at Ephesus were disciples, ver. 1. such as did know unto what they had been baptized, ver. 3. and yet are baptized again, because not duly informed before concerning the grounds of Christ's baptism; and this is written for our learning, when our case is like theirs.

## P O S T S C R I P T.

**T**HE Reader may be confident, we are not without foresight, that our hearty desire and endeavour for truth and peace, will be little regarded by many; some will censure us, others condemn us, and what we have here proposed.

But be it so, yet we also hope some will consider what we have offered; and may it but give some light to a better understanding of the case depending, or move any whose circumstances may render them more serviceable to promote truth and peace amongst dissenting christians, we shall be content to labour, and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God.

*Since*

Since the precedent Epistle was written, some of us have seen a Sermon preached by Dr. Stillingfleet, on Phil. iii. 16. wherein he also endeavours for peace amongst dissenting christians; but there is one thing necessary (which he does not much meddle with) and that is to shew, That the church he would have us to communicate with, is such for constitution and government as was that at Philippi: When he shall do this, he may be confident small faults shall not keep us from her communion: And that she may be such, is the unfeigned desire and endeavour of the authors of the precedent Epistle.

F I N I S.



